

# FREE CURVES ON VARIETIES

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**ABSTRACT.** We study various generalisations of rationally connected varieties, allowing the connecting curves to be of higher genus. The main focus will be on free curves  $f : C \rightarrow X$  with large unobstructed deformation space as originally defined by Kollár, but we also give definitions and basic properties of varieties  $X$  covered by a family of curves of a fixed genus  $g$  so that through any two general points of  $X$  there passes the image of a curve in the family. Giving examples along the way we prove that the existence of a free curve of genus  $g \geq 1$  implies the variety is rationally connected in characteristic zero.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Let  $k$  be an algebraically closed field. A smooth projective rationally connected variety, originally defined in [KMM92c] and [Cam92], is a variety such that through every two general points there passes the image of a rational curve. In characteristic zero this is equivalent to the notion of a separably rationally connected variety, given by the existence of a rational curve  $f : \mathbb{P}^1 \rightarrow X$  such that  $f^*T_X$  is ample. In characteristic  $p$  however one has to distinguish between these two notions. Deformations of a morphism  $f : \mathbb{P}^1 \rightarrow X$  are controlled by the sheaf  $f^*\mathcal{T}_X$ , hence studying positivity conditions of this bundle is intimately tied to deformation theory and the existence of many rational curves on  $X$ . A classical theorem of Grothendieck [Gro57] gives us easy numerical criteria for testing positivity statements for  $f^*\mathcal{T}_X$  on  $\mathbb{P}^1$ .

**LEMMA 1.1.** ([Kol96] II.3.8) *A locally free sheaf  $\mathcal{E}$  of rank  $n$  on  $\mathbb{P}^1$  is called semi-positive (respectively ample) if any of the following equivalent conditions are satisfied*

- i)  $H^1(\mathbb{P}^1, \mathcal{E}(-1)) = 0$  (respectively  $H^1(\mathbb{P}^1, \mathcal{E}(-2)) = 0$ ),
- ii)  $\mathcal{E}$  (respectively  $\mathcal{E}(-1)$ ) is generated by global sections,
- iii)  $\mathcal{E} \cong \bigoplus_{i=1}^n \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}^1}(a_i)$  with  $a_i \geq 0$  (respectively  $\geq 1$ ) for all  $i$ ,
- iv)  $H^0(\mathbb{P}^1, \mathcal{E}) \rightarrow \mathcal{E} \otimes k(p)$  (respectively  $H^0(\mathbb{P}^1, \mathcal{E}(-1)) \rightarrow \mathcal{E}(-1) \otimes k(p)$ ) is surjective for some  $p \in \mathbb{P}^1$ ,
- v)  $\mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}(\mathcal{E})}(1)$  is nef (respectively ample) as a line bundle on  $\mathbb{P}(\mathcal{E})$ .

Rationally connected varieties have especially nice properties. Note in particular the following important theorem which we will make repeated use of throughout this paper.

**THEOREM 1.2.** (Graber-Harris-Starr [GHS03], de Jong-Starr [dJS03]) *Over  $k$  an arbitrary algebraically closed field, let  $C$  be a smooth irreducible projective curve and  $f : X \rightarrow C$  a proper flat morphism whose geometric generic fibre is normal and separably rationally connected. Then  $f$  has a section.*

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*Date:* August 21, 2012.

Starting with an arbitrary smooth variety one can form a fibration (the MRC fibration) over a smooth base such that the general fibre is rationally chain connected, or in other words that through every two points there is a chain of rational curves (i.e. a connected genus 0 curve). Smoothing of combs techniques (see [Kol96] II.7) make the notions of rationally chain connected and rationally connected varieties equivalent in characteristic zero so in this case the MRC fibration has rationally connected fibres. In positive characteristic it is not known whether these two notions differ however. A consequence of the above theorem in characteristic zero is that if  $X \rightarrow Y$  is a morphism of smooth projective varieties such that the general fibre and  $Y$  are rationally connected, then so is  $X$ . Another consequence is the following in characteristic zero which we will make repeated use of, noting that it is equivalent to the Graber-Harris-Starr Theorem.

**COROLLARY 1.3.** ([Kol96] Proposition IV.5.6.3) *Let  $X$  be a variety over an algebraically closed field  $k$  of characteristic zero and let  $X \dashrightarrow R(X)$  be the MRC fibration. Then  $R(X)$  is not uniruled.*

One of the big open conjectures in the area gives a numerical characterisation of when a variety can be rationally connected.

**CONJECTURE 1.4.** (Mumford) *A smooth projective variety  $X$  over an algebraically closed field of characteristic zero is uniruled if and only if*

$$H^0(X, \omega_X^{\otimes m}) = 0 \text{ for all } m > 0$$

*whereas it is rationally connected if and only if*

$$H^0(X, (\Omega_X^1)^{\otimes m}) = 0 \text{ for all } m > 0.$$

Note that the reverse directions of both conjectures hold (see [Deb01] Corollary 4.12), whereas both are true in dimensions two and three.

In this paper we study the various ways in which a variety can be connected by higher genus curves. After an introductory section with preliminary results on vector bundles on curves and Frobenius, we consider first varieties which admit a morphism from a family of curves of fixed arithmetic genus  $g$  whose product with itself dominates the product of the variety with itself and call these varieties “genus  $g$  connected”, generalising the notion of there being a rational curve through two general points. We also consider  $C$ -connected varieties, where there exists a family  $C \times U \rightarrow X$  of a single smooth genus  $g$  curve  $C$  such that  $C \times C \times U \rightarrow X \times X$  is dominant. Mori’s important bend and break result allows us to produce rational curves going through a fixed point given a higher genus curve which has large enough deformation space.

**THEOREM 1.5.** (Bend and break, [Deb01] 3.1) *Let  $X$  be a projective variety over an algebraically closed field  $k$ ,  $f : C \rightarrow X$  a morphism from a smooth projective curve and  $c \in C$ . If  $\dim_{[f]} \text{Hom}(C, X; f|_{\{c\}}) \geq 1$ , then there exists a rational curve on  $X$  through  $f(c)$ .*

In Proposition 3.13 we show that over any characteristic, if for any two general points of a smooth projective variety  $X$  with  $\dim X \geq 2$  there passes the image of a morphism from a fixed curve  $C$  of genus  $g$ , then  $X$  is uniruled or in other words there is a rational curve

through a general point. In chapter 2.2 we prove basic properties of such varieties and give examples but one quickly has to restrict to a less general setting.

A stronger condition than the aforementioned is a generalisation of the existence of a morphism from a curve which deforms a lot, as discussed for separably rationally connected varieties above. Namely, we introduce the existence of a free curve  $f : C \rightarrow X$  first studied by Kollár [Kol96] where now  $C$  can be of any genus  $g$ . We call a morphism free if  $f^* \mathcal{T}_X$  is globally generated as a vector bundle on  $C$  and also  $H^1(C, f^* \mathcal{T}_X) = 0$ . In the case of genus  $g = 0$  one must distinguish between free and very free curves, geometrically meaning that  $f : \mathbb{P}^1 \rightarrow X$  deforms so that its image covers all points in  $X$  or whether it can do so after fixing a point  $x \in f(\mathbb{P}^1)$  respectively. In other words a variety with a free rational curve is uniruled whereas a variety with a very free curve is rationally connected. If  $g \geq 1$  however, after defining an  $r$ -free curve to be one which deforms keeping any  $r$  points fixed, we show that the notions of the existence of a free (0-free) and very free (1-free) curve coincide and in fact are equivalent with the existence of a curve  $f : C \rightarrow X$  such that  $f^* \mathcal{T}_X$  is ample.

**THEOREM.** (Theorem 4.12) *Let  $X$  be a smooth projective variety and  $C$  a smooth projective curve of genus  $g \geq 1$  over an algebraically closed field  $k$ . Then for any  $r \geq 0$ , there exists an  $f : C \rightarrow X$  which is  $r$ -free if and only if there exists a morphism  $f' : C \rightarrow X$  such that  $f'^* \mathcal{T}_X$  is ample.*

Work of Bogomolov-McQuillan (see Theorem 5.4) and more recently a proof of the same result by Kebekus-Solá Conde-Toma (see [BM01], [KSCT07]) on foliations which restrict to an ample bundle on a smooth curve sitting inside a complex variety  $X$  show that the leaves of such a foliation are not only algebraic but in fact have rationally connected closures. We reprove this result in the case of the foliation  $\mathcal{F} = \mathcal{T}_X$  thus assuming the existence of a free curve  $f : C \rightarrow X$ , complementing the currently known connections between existence of curves with large deformation spaces and rationally connected varieties. Our proof is in the same vein as that in [KSCT07] but emphasises the use of free curves.

**THEOREM.** (Corollary 5.3) *Let  $X$  be a smooth projective variety over an algebraically closed field of characteristic zero and let  $f : C \rightarrow X$  be a smooth projective curve of genus  $g \geq 1$  such that  $f^* \mathcal{T}_X$  is globally generated and  $H^1(C, f^* \mathcal{T}_X) = 0$ . Then  $X$  is rationally connected.*

We give examples along the way and prove various useful properties of  $C$ -connected varieties and varieties admitting a free morphism from a curve of any genus  $g$ . Notably, in characteristic zero, this last class of varieties is the same as that of rationally connected varieties. One would hope that the existence of a higher genus free curve could on occasion be easier to prove, thus meaning our variety is rationally connected, however the author has not been able to find such a non-trivial example.

In the third section, we study the particular case of elliptically connected varieties (i.e. genus 1 connected varieties) where, even allowing a covering family of genus 1 curves to vary in moduli, one can in fact prove the following theorem.

**THEOREM.** (Theorem 6.3) *Let  $X$  be a smooth projective variety over a field of characteristic zero. Then the following two statements are equivalent*

- i) *There exists  $\mathcal{C} \rightarrow U$  a flat projective family of irreducible genus 1 curves with a map  $\mathcal{C} \rightarrow X$  such that  $\mathcal{C} \times_U \mathcal{C} \rightarrow X \times X$  is dominant.*
- ii)  *$X$  is either rationally connected or a rationally connected fibration over a curve of genus 1.*

In positive characteristic, at this point we have not been able to prove that the existence of a higher genus free curve implies the existence of a very free rational curve (which would mean that  $X$  is separably rationally connected). We work however in this direction, establishing this result in dimensions two (with a short discussion about dimension three) and furthermore by studying algebraic implications of the existence of a free higher genus curve, such as the vanishing of pluricanonical forms and triviality of the Albanese variety. In the final section we give an example of a threefold in characteristic  $p$  whose MRC quotient is rationally connected and which has infinite fundamental group.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.** The contents of this paper are from the author's thesis under the supervision of Victor Flynn, which the author would like to thank for his continuous encouragement and help over the years. I am also hugely indebted to Damiano Testa for the countless hours he patiently spent answering questions and educating me and to Johan de Jong not only for the hospitality at Columbia University during my final year but also for helping significantly improve the contents of this paper and sharing his ideas. I would also like to thank Jason Starr for helpful discussions and suggestions and to Yongqi Liang for comments and pointing out some errors in an early draft. This research was completed under the support of EPSRC grant number EP/F060661/1.

## 2. AMPLE VECTOR BUNDLES AND FROBENIUS

We begin with some results concerning positivity of vector bundles on curves. Unless otherwise mentioned, assume that a variety  $X$  is over an algebraically closed field and if projective,  $\mathcal{O}_X(1)$  is a fixed ample vector bundle.

**DEFINITION 2.1.** A locally free sheaf  $\mathcal{E}$  on a scheme  $X$  is called ample if  $\mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}(\mathcal{E})}(1)$  has this property.

Ampleness was originally discussed in [Har71], [Har66], [Har70] where the definition was given as follows:  $\mathcal{E}$  is ample if for every coherent sheaf  $\mathcal{F}$  on  $X$ , there exists a positive integer  $n_0$  such that for all  $n > n_0$ , the  $\mathcal{O}_X$ -module  $\mathcal{F} \otimes S^n(\mathcal{E})$  is generated by global sections. This definition is equivalent with the one given above.

**LEMMA 2.2.** *Let  $C$  be a smooth projective curve of genus  $g \geq 2$  over an algebraically closed field of characteristic zero and  $\mathcal{E}$  a locally free sheaf on  $C$  such that  $H^1(C, \mathcal{E}) = 0$ . It follows that  $\mathcal{E}$  is ample.*

**PROOF.** From [Har71] Theorem 2.4, it suffices to show that every non-trivial quotient locally free sheaf of  $\mathcal{E}$  has positive degree. Let  $\mathcal{E} \rightarrow \mathcal{E}' \rightarrow 0$  be a quotient. From the long exact sequence in cohomology we see that  $H^1(C, \mathcal{E}')$  is also 0. From the Riemann-Roch formula  $\chi(\mathcal{E}') = \deg \mathcal{E}' + \text{rk } \mathcal{E}' \chi(\mathcal{O}_X)$  from which we obtain  $h^0(C, \mathcal{E}') = \deg \mathcal{E}' + (\text{rk } \mathcal{E}')(1 - g)$  and since  $g \geq 2$  we deduce that  $\deg \mathcal{E}' > 0$ .  $\square$

More generally, over any characteristic if we further assume that our locally free sheaf is globally generated then the same result holds so long as the genus is at least 1.

**PROPOSITION 2.3.** *Let  $C$  be a smooth projective curve of genus  $g \geq 1$  over an algebraically closed field  $k$  and  $\mathcal{E}$  a globally generated locally free sheaf on  $C$  such that  $H^1(C, \mathcal{E}) = 0$ . Then  $\mathcal{E}$  is ample.*

**PROOF.** Since  $\mathcal{E}$  is globally generated, there exists a positive integer  $n$  such that  $\mathcal{O}_C^{\oplus n} \rightarrow \mathcal{E} \rightarrow 0$  is exact. This gives (see [Har77] ex. II.3.12) a closed immersion of the respective projective bundles  $\mathbb{P}(\mathcal{E}) \hookrightarrow \mathbb{P}^{n-1}$ . By projecting onto the first factor we have the following diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathbb{P}(\mathcal{E}) & \xrightarrow{i} & \mathbb{P}^{n-1} \times C \xrightarrow{\text{pr}_1} \mathbb{P}^{n-1} \\ & \searrow \pi & \downarrow \text{pr}_2 \\ & & C \end{array}$$

and from [Har77] II.5.12 we have  $\text{pr}_1^* \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}^{n-1}}(1) = \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}^{n-1} \times C}(1)$ . Also, since  $i$  is a closed immersion it follows that  $i^* \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}^{n-1} \times C}(1) = \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}^{n-1} \times C}(1)|_{\mathbb{P}(\mathcal{E})} = \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}(\mathcal{E})}(1)$  which concludes that  $i^* \text{pr}_1^* \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}^{n-1}}(1) = \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}(\mathcal{E})}(1)$ . To show that  $\mathcal{E}$  is an ample locally free sheaf on  $C$  it is enough to show that this invertible sheaf is ample. Since we know that  $\mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}^{n-1}}(1)$  is ample though, it is sufficient to show that  $i \circ \text{pr}_1$  is a finite morphism. Since it is projective, we need only show that it is quasi-finite. Hence assuming that the fibre of  $i \circ \text{pr}_1$  over a general point  $p \in \mathbb{P}^{n-1}$  is not finite, it must be the whole of  $C$ . We now embed this fibre  $j : C \rightarrow \mathbb{P}(\mathcal{E})$  as a section to  $\pi$  and pull back the surjection  $\pi^* \mathcal{E} \rightarrow \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}(\mathcal{E})}(1)$  via  $j$ , obtaining  $j^* \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}(\mathcal{E})}(1)$  as a quotient of  $j^* \pi^* \mathcal{E} = \mathcal{E}$  (see [Har77] II.7.12). However  $\text{pr}_1 \circ i \circ j : C \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^{n-1}$  is a constant map so  $j^* \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}(\mathcal{E})}(1) = \mathcal{O}_C$ . Taking cohomology of the corresponding short exact sequence given by this quotient, we obtain a contradiction since  $H^1(C, \mathcal{E}) = 0$  whereas  $H^1(C, \mathcal{O}_C)$  is not trivial for  $g \geq 1$ .  $\square$

In Proposition 2.7 below we will prove that given an ample bundle on a curve in positive characteristic, then after pulling back by Frobenius, we can make this bundle be globally generated and have vanishing first cohomology.

**LEMMA 2.4.** *Let  $C$  be a smooth projective curve over an algebraically closed field  $k$ ,  $d \geq 0$  an integer and  $\mathcal{E}$  a locally free sheaf on  $C$ . If  $H^1(C, \mathcal{E}(-D)) = 0$  for all effective divisors  $D$  of fixed degree  $d$  then for  $d' \leq d$  it follows that  $H^1(C, \mathcal{E}(-D')) = 0$  and  $\mathcal{E}(-D')$  is globally generated for all effective divisors  $D'$  of degree  $d'$ .*

**PROOF.** The first result follows from the short exact sequence

$$0 \rightarrow \mathcal{E}(-D' - R) \rightarrow \mathcal{E}(-D') \rightarrow \mathcal{E}(-D')|_R \rightarrow 0$$

where  $R$  is an effective divisor of degree  $d - d'$ . For the second, let  $p \in C$ . From the first part we have  $H^1(C, \mathcal{E}(-D' - p)) = 0$  since  $D' + p$  is an effective divisor of degree  $d' + 1 \leq d$  so the following sequence is exact

$$0 \rightarrow H^0(C, \mathcal{E}(-D' - p)) \rightarrow H^0(C, \mathcal{E}(-D')) \rightarrow \mathcal{E}(-D') \otimes k(p) \rightarrow 0.$$

Hence  $\mathcal{E}(-D')$  is globally generated at  $p$  and the result follows.  $\square$

**LEMMA 2.5.** *Let  $C$  be a smooth projective curve and  $\phi : \mathcal{E} \rightarrow \mathcal{F}$  a morphism between two locally free sheaves. Assume that the image of  $\phi$  has full rank (i.e. that the image of  $\phi$  has rank  $\text{rk } \mathcal{F}$ ), that  $\mathcal{E}$  is globally generated and  $H^1(C, \mathcal{E}) = 0$ . Then  $\mathcal{F}$  is also globally generated and  $H^1(C, \mathcal{F}) = 0$ .*

**PROOF.** Let  $\mathcal{F}'$  be the locally free sheaf associated to the image of  $\phi$ . For a torsion sheaf  $\mathcal{Q}$  and a locally free sheaf  $\mathcal{K}$  we have the following short exact sequences of sheaves

$$\begin{aligned} 0 \rightarrow \mathcal{F}' \rightarrow \mathcal{F} \rightarrow \mathcal{Q} \rightarrow 0, \\ 0 \rightarrow \mathcal{K} \rightarrow \mathcal{E} \rightarrow \mathcal{F}' \rightarrow 0. \end{aligned}$$

As  $\mathcal{F}'$  is a quotient of  $\mathcal{E}$  we have that it is globally generated and  $H^1(C, \mathcal{F}') = 0$ . From the cohomology of the first exact sequence above we obtain that  $H^1(C, \mathcal{F}) = 0$  too. Now for  $p \in C$ , from the short exact sequence

$$0 \rightarrow \mathcal{F}'(-p) \rightarrow \mathcal{F}' \rightarrow \mathcal{F}' \otimes k(p) \rightarrow 0$$

we obtain that  $H^1(C, \mathcal{F}'(-p)) = 0$  for any  $p \in C$ . Twisting the first short exact sequence above by  $\mathcal{O}_C(-p)$  we similarly obtain that  $H^1(C, \mathcal{F}(-p)) = 0$  and from  $0 \rightarrow \mathcal{F}(-p) \rightarrow \mathcal{F} \rightarrow \mathcal{F} \otimes k(p) \rightarrow 0$  we see that  $\mathcal{F}$  is globally generated at  $p$ .  $\square$

Let  $k$  be an algebraically closed field of characteristic  $p > 0$  and  $F_X : X \rightarrow X$  be the absolute Frobenius morphism of a  $k$ -scheme  $X$  which leaves the topological space  $X$  unchanged but raises functions to the  $p$ -th power. More generally, consider an  $S$ -scheme  $X$  where  $S$  is a scheme over  $k$ . Pulling back the map  $X \rightarrow S$  via  $F_S$  we obtain

$$\begin{array}{ccc} X & \xrightarrow{F_X} & X \\ \searrow^{F_{X/S}} & \nearrow \alpha & \downarrow \\ & X^{(1)} & \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow \\ S & \xrightarrow{F_S} & S \end{array}$$

where  $F_{X/S} : X \rightarrow X^{(1)}$  is the relative Frobenius morphism which we get from the universality of the pull-back diagram. In the case where  $S = \text{Spec } k$  and  $X$  is a variety the relative Frobenius morphism  $F_{X/k}$  raises variables of the equation of  $X$  to the  $p$ -th power,  $\alpha$  is called the  $k$ -linear Frobenius morphism and raises the coefficients to the  $p$ -th power whereas  $F_X$  raises everything to the  $p$ -th power. Note that if  $C$  is a curve then  $C^{(1)}$  has the same genus as  $C$  and  $\alpha$  is a finite morphism of degree  $p$  so the pull back of a bundle under  $\alpha$  has degree multiplied by  $p$ , a fact which has many applications in the deformation theory of curves and Mori theory.

A partial converse to Proposition 2.3 in characteristic  $p$  is given by the following, using  $\mathbb{Q}$ -twisted vector bundles as in [Laz04] II.6.4.



**PROPOSITION 2.6.** ([KSCT07] Proposition 9) *Let  $C$  be a smooth projective curve of genus  $g$  over a field of characteristic  $p > 0$ ,  $\mathcal{E}$  a locally free sheaf of rank  $r$  and  $\delta \in \mathbb{Q}_+$ . Assume  $\mathcal{E}(-\delta)$  is ample and  $b_p(\delta) := p\delta - 2g + 1 \geq 0$ . Then for  $F : C^{(1)} \rightarrow C$  the  $k$ -linear Frobenius morphism and every subscheme  $B \subset C^{(1)}$  of length smaller than or equal to  $b_p(\delta)$  we have*

$$H^1(C^{(1)}, F^* \mathcal{E} \otimes \mathcal{I}_B) = 0$$

and  $F^* \mathcal{E} \otimes \mathcal{I}_B$  is globally generated.

We prove the following different version of this result.

**PROPOSITION 2.7.** *Let  $C$  be a smooth projective curve of genus  $g$  over an algebraically closed field  $k$  of characteristic  $p$  and let  $\mathcal{E}$  be an ample locally free sheaf on  $C$ . Let  $B \subset C$  be a closed subscheme of length  $b$  and ideal sheaf  $\mathcal{I}_B$ . Then there exists a positive integer  $n$  such that  $H^1(C^{(n)}, F_n^* \mathcal{E} \otimes \mathcal{I}_B) = 0$  and  $F_n^* \mathcal{E} \otimes \mathcal{I}_B$  is globally generated on  $C^{(n)}$  where  $F_n : C^{(n)} \rightarrow C$  the  $n$ -fold composition of the  $k$ -linear Frobenius morphism.*

**PROOF.** We proceed by induction. First, assume we can write  $\mathcal{E}$  as an extension

$$0 \rightarrow \mathcal{O}_C(p) \rightarrow \mathcal{E} \rightarrow \mathcal{Q} \rightarrow 0$$

where  $p \in C$ . If  $\mathcal{Q}$  is not torsion free, consider the saturation of  $\mathcal{O}_C(p)$  in  $\mathcal{E}$  instead and take  $\mathcal{Q}$  as that quotient. Since  $\mathcal{E}$  is ample, so is its quotient  $\mathcal{Q}$  and indeed so is  $\mathcal{O}_C(p)$  as a degree 1 invertible sheaf on a curve. Note also that the rank of  $\mathcal{Q}$  is one less than that of  $\mathcal{E}$  and that if we can prove the result for  $\mathcal{Q}$  then we will have it for  $\mathcal{E}$  too by considering cohomology of the appropriate exact sequences. We thus reduce to the case of  $\mathcal{E} = \mathcal{L}$  an invertible sheaf of positive degree (since it is ample). We now know that an invertible sheaf  $\mathcal{L}$  pulls back under the  $n$ -fold composition of the linear Frobenius morphism to an invertible sheaf  $F_n^* \mathcal{L}$  of degree  $p^n \deg \mathcal{L}$ . To show that  $H^1(C^{(n)}, F_n^* \mathcal{L} \otimes \mathcal{I}_B) = 0$ , it is equivalent by Serre duality to show that  $\text{Hom}_{C^{(n)}}(F_n^* \mathcal{L}, \mathcal{O}_{C^{(n)}}(B) \otimes \omega_{C^{(n)}}) = 0$ . Since the invertible sheaf  $\mathcal{O}_{C^{(n)}}(B) \otimes \omega_{C^{(n)}}$  has degree  $b + 2g - 2$  and by picking  $n$  large enough, we can ensure  $p^n \deg \mathcal{L} > b + 2g - 2$  from which we obtain  $H^1(C^{(n)}, F_n^* \mathcal{L} \otimes \mathcal{I}_B) = 0$  and hence  $H^1(C^{(n)}, F_n^* \mathcal{E} \otimes \mathcal{I}_B) = 0$  for a locally free sheaf of any rank.

To show that  $F_n^* \mathcal{E} \otimes \mathcal{I}_B$  is globally generated, pick a point  $q \in C$ . Then  $\mathcal{I}_B \otimes \mathcal{I}_q$  has length  $b + 1$  and from the discussion above  $H^1(C^{(n)}, F_n^* \mathcal{E} \otimes \mathcal{I}_B \otimes \mathcal{I}_q)$  vanishes when  $p^n \deg \mathcal{L} > b + 1 + 2g - 2$  so we can just pick  $n$  large enough to fit this condition. Now, by taking the long exact sequence in cohomology of

$$0 \rightarrow F_n^* \mathcal{E} \otimes \mathcal{I}_B \otimes \mathcal{I}_q \rightarrow F_n^* \mathcal{E} \otimes \mathcal{I}_B \rightarrow (F_n^* \mathcal{E} \otimes \mathcal{I}_B) \otimes k(q) \rightarrow 0$$

we conclude that  $F_n^* \mathcal{E} \otimes \mathcal{I}_B$  is globally generated.

That  $\mathcal{E}$  can not be written as an extension of  $\mathcal{O}_C(p)$  and a quotient locally free sheaf  $\mathcal{Q}$  is equivalent to  $H^0(C, \mathcal{E}(-p)) = 0$ . However there exists a positive integer  $m$  for which  $H^0(C^{(m)}, (F_m^* \mathcal{E}) \otimes \mathcal{O}_{C^{(m)}}(-p)) \neq 0$  and we proceed as before with this sheaf.  $\square$

### 3. DEFINITION OF CURVE CONNECTEDNESS: PART I - COVERING FAMILIES

We now define various ways in which a variety can be covered by curves, generalising the classical notions of ruled, uniruled and rationally connected varieties.

A preliminary remark should be made about the Rigidity Lemma of Mumford from [Mum70] (or [MFK94] Proposition 6.1, [KM98] Lemma 1.6). The underlying principle is that if one of the fibres of a proper flat family is contracted under a morphism to another variety, then every fibre is contracted. We will often subsume this result whenever we have a family of varieties mapping to another variety, thus often without explicitly stating that one of the fibres does not get contracted so that the family is not trivial under the morphism.

**DEFINITION 3.1.** Let  $X$  be a variety of dimension  $n$  over a field  $k$ . We say that  $X$  is ruled (resp. uniruled, separably uniruled) if there is a scheme  $Y$  over  $k$  of dimension  $n - 1$  and a map  $\mathbb{P}_Y^1 \dashrightarrow X$  which is birational (resp. dominant, dominant and smooth at the generic point).

**DEFINITION 3.2.** ([Kol96] IV.3.2) Let  $X$  be a variety over a field  $k$ . We say that  $X$  is rationally chain connected if there is a family of proper and connected algebraic curves  $g : U \rightarrow Y$  over a variety  $Y$  whose geometric fibres have only rational components, and a map  $u : U \rightarrow X$  such that

$$u^{(2)} : U \times_Y U \rightarrow X \times_k X$$

is dominant. We say that  $X$  is rationally connected if the geometric fibres of  $g$  are furthermore assumed to be irreducible rational curves. If we assume that  $u^{(2)}$  is also smooth at the generic point then  $X$  is called separably rationally (chain) connected.

We can extend the definition of a uniruled variety to allow a covering family of morphisms from an arbitrary curve of higher genus as follows.

**DEFINITION 3.3.** Let  $X$  be a variety over a field  $k$  and  $C$  a smooth projective curve over  $k$ . We say that  $X$  is  $C$ -ruled if there exists a variety  $Y$  over  $k$  and a dominant morphism  $u : C \times Y \rightarrow X$ .

We similarly extend the definition of rationally connected varieties to include curves of higher genus as follows.

**DEFINITION 3.4.** We say that a variety  $X$  over a field  $k$  is connected by genus  $g \geq 0$  curves (resp. chain connected by genus  $g$  curves) if there exists a proper flat morphism  $\mathcal{C} \rightarrow Y$ , for a variety  $Y$ , whose geometric fibres are irreducible genus  $g$  curves (resp. connected genus  $g$  curves) such that there is a morphism  $u : \mathcal{C} \rightarrow X$  making the induced morphism  $u^{(2)} : \mathcal{C} \times_Y \mathcal{C} \rightarrow X \times_k X$  dominant.

**DEFINITION 3.5.** Keeping notation as in Definitions 3.3 and 3.4 we say that a variety  $X$  is separably (chain) connected by genus  $g$  curves if the morphism  $\mathcal{C} \times_Y \mathcal{C} \rightarrow X \times_k X$  is also smooth at the generic point. One likewise defines a separably  $C$ -ruled variety.

A genus 0 connected variety is rationally connected. A variety which is connected by genus 1 curves will be called (with a slight abuse of notation) elliptically connected and similarly we have rationally and elliptically chain connected varieties. Even though we will



often assume that a genus  $g$  connected variety is of dimension at least 2, note that we allow  $Y$  to be a point in the above definition. Consider for example that  $\mathbb{P}^1$  is an elliptically connected variety.

Note that the notions of separably and non-separably genus  $g$  connected varieties coincide when  $k$  is of characteristic zero due to generic smoothness.

**REMARK 3.6.** In the case of rationally connected varieties over an algebraically closed field, it is enough to consider trivial families  $\mathbb{P}^1 \times Y \rightarrow X$  in our definition, as rational curves are all isomorphic to  $\mathbb{P}^1$  over an algebraically closed field. Note that a non-constant family  $u : E \times Y \rightarrow X$  where  $E$  is an elliptic curve will have the property that the image  $u(E_y)$  for  $y \in Y$  is isogenous to  $E$ .

The relevant moduli spaces which we will be considering are the following. First (see [Kol96] II.1.5 and [Mor79]), the space  $\text{Hom}_S(\mathcal{C}, X, g)$  parametrising  $S$ -morphisms from an  $\mathcal{C} \rightarrow S$  a flat projective curve over an irreducible scheme  $S$  to  $X \rightarrow S$  a smooth quasi-projective scheme with fixed points  $g : B \rightarrow X$  an  $S$ -morphism from some  $B \subset \mathcal{C}$  closed subscheme which is flat and finite over  $S$ . We now restrict the above to the case where  $S$  is the spectrum of an algebraically closed field  $k$  and fix some notation of the following evaluation morphisms to be used in later sections

$$\begin{aligned} F : \mathcal{C} \times \text{Hom}(\mathcal{C}, X, g) &\rightarrow X \\ F^{(2)} : \mathcal{C} \times \mathcal{C} \times \text{Hom}(\mathcal{C}, X, g) &\rightarrow X \times X \\ \phi(p, f) : H^0(\mathcal{C}, f^* \mathcal{T}_X \otimes \mathcal{I}_B) &\rightarrow f^* \mathcal{T}_X \otimes k(p) \\ \phi^{(2)}(p, q, f) : H^0(\mathcal{C}, f^* \mathcal{T}_X \otimes \mathcal{I}_B) &\rightarrow f^* \mathcal{T}_X \otimes k(p) \oplus f^* \mathcal{T}_X \otimes k(q). \end{aligned}$$

For a morphism  $f : X \rightarrow Y$  and  $x \in X$  denote the map on tangent spaces by  $df(x) : \mathcal{T}_X \otimes k(x) \rightarrow \mathcal{T}_Y \otimes k(f(x))$ . Secondly we consider the relative moduli space of genus  $g$  degree  $d$  stable  $Q$ -marked curves with base point  $t : P \rightarrow X$ , denoted by  $\overline{\mathcal{M}}_{g,Q}(X/S, d, t)$  as in [AK03].

**LEMMA 3.7.** *Let  $X$  be a genus  $g$  (chain) connected smooth projective variety over an algebraically closed field  $k$ . Then if  $g' \geq 2g - 1$ ,  $X$  is also genus  $g'$  (chain) connected.*

**PROOF.** Let  $\mathcal{C}/Y \rightarrow X$  be the family making  $X$  a genus  $g$  (chain) connected variety with notation as in Definition 3.4. From Theorem 50 of [AK03] we have a projective algebraic space  $Y' = \overline{\mathcal{M}}_{g',Y}(\mathcal{C}/Y, d)$  of finite type over  $Y$  parametrizing stable families of degree  $d$  curves of genus  $g'$  over  $\mathcal{C} \rightarrow Y$ . The condition  $g' \geq 2g - 1$  coming from the Riemann-Hurwitz formula ensures that this moduli space is non-empty. From [ACG11] 12.9.2 there exists a normal scheme  $Z$  finite and surjective over  $Y'$  and a flat and proper family  $\mathcal{X} \rightarrow Z$  of stable genus  $g$  curves of degree  $d$ . Restricting to a suitable open subset  $W \subset Z$  parametrizing irreducible curves we compose the family  $\mathcal{X}|_W \rightarrow W$  with the evaluation morphism to  $X$  and the result follows.  $\square$

An example of an elliptically connected variety over a non-algebraically closed field is given after the proof of Theorem 6.3.

Instead of assuming we have a possibly non-isotrivial family of curves dominating a variety  $X$  we may want to restrict to a single curve.

**DEFINITION 3.8.** We say that a variety  $X$  over a field  $k$  is  $C$ -connected for a curve  $C$  if there exists a variety  $Y$  and a map  $u : C \times Y \rightarrow X$  such that the induced map  $u^{(2)} : C \times C \times Y \rightarrow X \times X$  is dominant. If  $u^{(2)}$  is also smooth at the generic point, then we say that  $X$  is separably  $C$ -connected.

Obviously a  $C$ -connected variety is genus  $g$  connected where  $g$  is the genus of the curve  $C$ . Projective space is  $C$ -connected for every smooth projective curve  $C$ . An example of a  $C$ -connected variety which is not rationally connected is  $C \times \mathbb{P}^n$ . To see this let  $(c_1, x_1), (c_2, x_2)$  be any two points in  $C \times \mathbb{P}^n$  and let  $f : C \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^n$  a morphism which sends  $c_i \mapsto x_i$ . Considering the graph of  $f$  in  $C \times \mathbb{P}^n$  we have found a curve isomorphic to  $C$  which goes through our two points. Using part (4) and (5) from Lemma 3.10 below, the result follows. More generally, examples can also be constructed from Proposition 3.12 below.

**LEMMA 3.9.** *Let  $X$  be a smooth projective variety over an algebraically closed field  $k$ . There exists an integer  $g \geq 0$  such that  $X$  is connected by genus  $g$  curves.*

**PROOF.** Let  $d = \dim X$  and consider  $\mathbb{P}^N$  as the space parametrizing hypersurfaces of high degree for some  $N \gg d$ . Let  $T = \mathbb{P}^N \times \dots \times \mathbb{P}^N$  be the product of  $d - 1$  copies of  $\mathbb{P}^N$ . Consider the family  $\mathcal{C} \rightarrow T$  such that

$$\mathcal{C} = \{(x, H_1, \dots, H_{d-1}) : x \in H_i \text{ for all } i = 1, \dots, d-1\} \subset X \times T.$$

The fibre  $\mathcal{C}_t$  above a point  $t \in T$  is given by the curve  $H_1 \cap \dots \cap H_{d-1}$  and by Bertini's Theorem [Har77] II.8.18 and generic flatness we know that there is a non-empty locus  $Y \subset T$  over which the fibres are smooth and the map to  $Y$  is flat. Finally, we replace  $\mathcal{C} \rightarrow T$  with the irreducible component of  $\mathcal{C}$  over  $Y$  which dominates  $X$  under the projection map onto the first factor.  $\square$

The following are mostly straight-forward generalisations of various results in [Kol96] IV.3.

**LEMMA 3.10.** *The following statements hold for a variety  $X$  over a field  $k$  and  $C$  a smooth projective curve.*

- i) *If  $X$  is genus  $g$  connected and  $X \dashrightarrow Y$  a dominant rational map to a proper variety  $Y$ , then  $Y$  is also genus  $g$  connected. The same holds if  $X$  is  $C$ -connected.*
- ii) *If  $X$  is proper then it is  $C$ -connected if and only if there is a proper variety  $W$ , closed in  $\text{Hom}(C, X)$  such that  $u^{(2)} : C \times C \times W \rightarrow X \times X$  is dominant.*
- iii) *If  $X$  is proper and  $C$ -connected over an algebraically closed field, then for arbitrary points  $x_1, x_2 \in X$  there exists a morphism  $C \rightarrow X$  whose image contains  $x_1, x_2$ .*
- iv) *If  $X$  is defined over a field  $k$  and  $K/k$  an extension of fields, then  $X_K := X \times_k K$  is  $C$ -connected if and only if  $X_k$  is.*
- v) *A variety  $X$  over an uncountable algebraically closed field is  $C$ -connected if and only if for all very general  $x_1, x_2 \in X$  there exists a morphism  $C \rightarrow X$  which passes through  $x_1, x_2$ .*

- vi) *A variety  $X$  over an uncountable algebraically closed field is genus  $g$  connected if and only if for all very general  $x_1, x_2 \in X$  there exists a smooth irreducible genus  $g$  curve containing them.*
- vii) *Being rationally connected is closed under connected finite étale covers for proper varieties.*
- viii) *Being elliptically connected is closed under connected finite étale covers for proper varieties.*

**PROOF.** To prove (1), let  $u : \mathcal{C}/M \rightarrow X$  be the family making  $X$  genus  $g$  connected and denote by  $u' : \mathcal{C}/M \dashrightarrow Y$  the composition. Restricting  $u'$  to the generic fibre  $\mathcal{C}_{k(M)}$  we have a rational map  $\phi : \mathcal{C}_{k(M)} \dashrightarrow Y$ . Since  $Y$  is proper, by a corollary to the valuative criterion of properness (see [EGA] II Proposition 7.4.9) we can extend  $\phi$  to a morphism  $\phi : \mathcal{C}_{k(M)} \rightarrow Y$ . By spreading out to an open subset  $M' \subseteq M$  (see [EGA] IV<sub>3</sub> 8.10.5 for properness and 11.2.6 for flatness of the family) we obtain a family  $\mathcal{C}|_{M'} \rightarrow M'$  which makes  $Y$  also genus  $g$  connected.

For (2), consider  $\text{Hom}(C, X) = \cup R_i$  the decomposition into irreducible components. One direction of the statement is obvious, whereas for the other let  $C \times W \rightarrow W$  be a family which makes  $X$  a  $C$ -connected variety. If  $u_i : C \times R_i \rightarrow X$  the evaluation morphism, then for some  $i$  there is a morphism  $h : W \rightarrow R_i$  such that  $h(w) = [C_w \rightarrow X]$  for general  $w \in W$ . This implies that  $u_i^{(2)} : C \times C \times R_i \rightarrow X \times X$  is also dominant. Statement (3) follows from (2) by noting that since the composition of a proper morphisms is proper, we have that  $W$  is proper over  $k$ , and so  $C \times C \times W \rightarrow X \times X$  is also proper. Now the result follows from the fact that a proper dominant morphism is surjective.

For the next statement (4), we may compactify  $X$  and also assume that it is projective. One direction is simply a pullback under the morphism  $\text{Spec } K \rightarrow \text{Spec } k$ . For the other, if  $X_K$  is  $C_K$ -connected then from (2) there is a positive integer  $d$  such that the evaluation morphism

$$\text{ev}_K^d : C_K \times C_K \times \text{Hom}_d(C_K, X_K) \rightarrow X_K \times X_K$$

is dominant. Because of the universal property of the Hom scheme, we have that  $\text{Hom}(C, X) \times_k K = \text{Hom}(C_K, X_K)$  and  $(\text{ev}^d)_K = \text{ev}_K^d$  so  $\text{ev}^d : C \times C \times \text{Hom}(C, X) \rightarrow X \times X$  is also dominant.

For (5) and (6), again we may assume  $X$  is projective. If through every two very general points there passes the image of  $C$  under some morphism, then the map  $u^{(2)} : C \times C \times \text{Hom}(C, X) \rightarrow X \times X$  is dominant. Since  $\text{Hom}(C, X)$  has at most countably many irreducible components and  $X$  is the union of uncountably many proper subvarieties, the restriction of  $u^{(2)}$  to at least one of the components  $R_i$  must be dominant, which proves (5). Similarly for (6), after fixing an ample line bundle, let

$$\mathcal{M}_{g,0}(X) = \bigsqcup_{n \geq 0} \mathcal{M}_{g,0}(X, d) \subset \bigsqcup_{n \geq 0} \overline{\mathcal{M}}_{g,0}(X, d)$$

be the subspace of smooth curves of the moduli space from Theorem 50 of [AK03], where we have taken  $P, Q$  to be trivial. By taking a one point marking for  $Q$  we have a family  $\mathcal{M}_{g,1}(X) \rightarrow \mathcal{M}_{g,0}(X)$  with an evaluation map to  $X$ . Since for every two very general points in  $X$  we can find a smooth irreducible curve of genus  $g$  passing through them, the map

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathcal{M}_{g,1}(X) \times_{\mathcal{M}_{g,0}(X)} \mathcal{M}_{g,1}(X) & \longrightarrow & X \times X \\ \downarrow & & \\ \mathcal{M}_{g,0}(X) & & \end{array}$$

must be dominant. Arguing now with this family as we did for (5), the result follows.

For (7) and (8) we may assume that  $X$  is projective from Chow's Lemma. For (7) the proof is contained for example in [Deb01] 4.4.(5). For (8), let  $\mathcal{C} \rightarrow U$  be a family which makes  $X$  elliptically connected and let  $X' \rightarrow X$  be a connected finite étale cover. Consider the pullback diagram and  $\mathcal{C}' \rightarrow U' \rightarrow U$  the Stein factorisation

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} & \mathcal{C}' = \mathcal{C} \times_X X' & \longrightarrow & X' & \\ & \downarrow & & \downarrow & \\ U' & \swarrow & \mathcal{C} & \longrightarrow & X \\ & \searrow & \downarrow & & \\ & & U & & \end{array}$$

After possibly restricting  $U'$  to the open subset of curves in  $\mathcal{C}'$  which are irreducible, the family  $\mathcal{C}' \rightarrow U'$  makes  $X'$  elliptically connected.  $\square$

**REMARK 3.11.** Note from part (1) above that being genus  $g$  connected or  $C$ -connected is a birational invariant.

**PROPOSITION 3.12.** *Let  $X$  be a smooth projective variety over an algebraically closed field  $k$  and  $f : X \rightarrow C$  a flat morphism to a smooth projective curve whose geometric generic fibre is separably rationally connected. Then  $X$  is  $C$ -connected.*

**PROOF.** From Theorem 1.2, there is a section  $\sigma : C \rightarrow X$  to  $f$ . Now from Theorem 2.13 of [KMM92c] we can find a section to  $f$  passing through any two points in different fibres over  $C$ , hence we can find a copy of  $C$  passing through two very general points. The result now follows from Lemma 3.10 parts (5) and (6) above after possibly passing to an uncountable extension  $K/k$ .  $\square$

**PROPOSITION 3.13.** *Let  $X$  be a  $C$ -connected variety of dimension at least 2 over an algebraically closed field  $k$ . Then  $X$  is uniruled.*

**PROOF.** We can compactify  $X$  and also assume it is projective. Let  $u : C \times Y \rightarrow X$  be a family such that  $u^{(2)} : C \times C \times Y \rightarrow X \times X$  is dominant. By dimension considerations, we have

$$\dim Y + 2 \geq 2 \dim X$$

from which  $\dim Y \geq 2 \dim X - 2$  and so if  $\dim X \geq 2$  we obtain  $\dim Y \geq 2$ . Now, pick a general point  $x \in X$  and denote by  $Z \subset Y$  the locus of curves  $u_z : C_z \rightarrow X$  such that  $x \in u_z(C_z)$  for all  $z \in Z$ . We have that  $\dim Z \geq \dim Y - (\dim X - 1)$  and so for  $\dim X \geq 2$ ,  $\dim Z \geq 1$ . From the Bend and Break Lemma 1.5 we obtain a rational curve through every general point. After possibly an extension to an uncountable algebraically closed field this implies that  $X$  is uniruled (see [Deb01] Remark 4.2(5)).  $\square$

Denoting by  $X \dashrightarrow R(X)$  the MRC fibration, we let  $R^0(X) = X$ ,  $R^1(X) = R(X)$ ,  $R^2(X) = R(R(X))$  and so on the successive MRC quotients and obtain a tower of MRC fibrations

$$X \dashrightarrow R^1(X) \dashrightarrow \cdots \dashrightarrow R^n(X).$$

Since  $X$  is finite dimensional this tower must eventually stabilise and if  $R^i(X)$  is uniruled then  $\dim R^{i+1}(X) < \dim R^i(X)$ . In characteristic zero, we in fact have  $R(X) = \cdots = R^n(X)$  (see discussion below). In positive characteristic it can be that the tower has length greater than one - see the example given in the last section of this paper.

**PROPOSITION 3.14.** *Let  $X$  be a normal and proper  $C$ -connected variety over an algebraically closed field where  $C$  is a smooth projective curve. Then the tower  $X \dashrightarrow R^1(X) \dashrightarrow \cdots \dashrightarrow R^n(X)$  of MRC quotients terminates in either a point or a curve.*

**PROOF.** Let  $C \times Y \rightarrow X$  be the family which makes  $X$  a  $C$ -connected variety. After replacing  $R(X)$  by the closure of the image of  $\pi^0 : X \dashrightarrow R(X)$  we can assume that  $\pi^0$  is dominant. From Lemma 3.10 part (1) it follows that  $R(X)$  is also  $C$ -connected. Using the same method we obtain that  $R^i(X)$  are all  $C$ -connected. Hence from Proposition 3.13 if  $\dim R^i(X) \geq 2$ , it is uniruled. This implies that  $R^{i+1}(X)$  must have dimension strictly less than  $R^i(X)$  and so the result follows.  $\square$

Note that if  $k$  is algebraically closed of characteristic zero then we know from the Graber-Harris-Starr Theorem 1.3 that the MRC quotient  $R^1(X)$  is not uniruled, so if  $X$  is  $C$ -connected as in Proposition 3.14,  $R^1(X)$  must be either a curve or a point and one does not need to resort to taking successive quotients. Also, again in characteristic zero, from Theorem 1.2 it follows that the composition of two rationally connected fibrations is a rationally connected fibration, so in combination with the fact that rationally chain connected are rationally connected in characteristic zero, we obtain that if the tower of MRC fibrations ends in a point then  $X$  is rationally connected.

Hence if  $X$  is  $C$ -connected over an algebraically closed field of characteristic zero, we either have that  $X$  is rationally connected or that it is a rationally connected fibration over a curve. From Proposition 3.12 the converse holds too.

**REMARK 3.15.** As observed in [Occ06] Remark 4, over an algebraically closed field of characteristic zero, if the MRC quotient of a smooth projective variety  $X$  is a curve  $C$ , then the MRC fibration extends to the whole variety and coincides with the Albanese map. To see this, let  $\pi : X \dashrightarrow C$  be the MRC fibration. We know that the Albanese map contracts

all rational curves so we have a commutative diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccc} X & & \\ \downarrow & \searrow & \\ C & \dashrightarrow & B \end{array}$$

where  $B \subset \text{Alb } X$  is the image of the Albanese morphism. Hence  $B$  must be a curve, and so the fibres of the Albanese morphism  $X \rightarrow \text{Alb } X$  are connected (see [Uen75] 9.19). We conclude that  $B$  is isomorphic to  $C$ .

#### 4. DEFINITION OF CURVE CONNECTEDNESS: PART II - FREE MORPHISMS

We work with varieties over an algebraically closed field  $k$  of arbitrary characteristic. In this section we define ways in which a morphism from a curve  $C$  to a variety  $X$  can deform enough to give a large family of morphisms from  $C$  so as to cover  $X$ .

A notion studied extensively by Hartshorne [Har70] is that of a (local complete intersection) subvariety  $Y$  in a smooth projective variety  $X$  such that the normal bundle  $\mathcal{N}_{Y/X}$  is ample. In the case of curves we have the following lemma.

**LEMMA 4.1.** *Let  $X$  be a smooth projective variety over an algebraically closed field  $k$ . Then for some  $g \geq 0$  there exists a curve  $C \subset X$  of genus  $g$  such that  $\mathcal{N}_{C/X}$  is ample.*

**PROOF.** See [Har70] III.4. By taking successive ample hyperplane sections  $H_1 \cap \dots \cap H_r$  given by Bertini's Theorem we obtain a curve  $C$  whose normal bundle decomposes as

$$\mathcal{N}_{C/X} = \oplus_i \mathcal{N}_{H_i/X}|_C.$$

Since each of the summands is ample, so is  $\mathcal{N}_{C/X}$ . □

**REMARK 4.2.** In [Ott12], Ottem defines an ample closed subscheme  $Y \subset X$  of codimension  $r$  to be one where the exceptional divisor  $\mathcal{O}(E)$  of the blowup  $\text{Bl}_Y X$  of  $X$  along  $Y$  is an  $(r-1)$ -ample line bundle in the sense that for every coherent sheaf  $\mathcal{F}$  there is an integer  $m_0 > 0$  such that  $H^i(X, \mathcal{F} \otimes \mathcal{O}(E)^m) = 0$  for all  $m > m_0$  and  $i > r-1$ . In the case where  $Y$  is a Cartier divisor, this notion coincides with the usual notion of  $Y$  being an ample divisor. One can then prove that if  $Y$  is a local complete intersection subscheme of  $X$  which is ample, then the normal bundle  $\mathcal{N}_{Y/X}$  is an ample bundle.

We impose the following stronger positivity condition than that of Hartshorne above.

**DEFINITION 4.3.** ([Kol96] II.3.1) Let  $C$  be a smooth proper curve and  $X$  a smooth variety over a field  $k$ . Let  $f : C \rightarrow X$  a morphism and  $B \subset C$  a closed subscheme with ideal sheaf  $\mathcal{I}_B$  and  $g = f|_B$ . The morphism  $f$  is called free over  $g$  if it is non-constant and one of the following two equivalent conditions is satisfied:

- i) for every  $p \in C$  we have  $H^1(C, f^* \mathcal{T}_X \otimes \mathcal{I}_B(-p)) = 0$  or,
- ii)  $H^1(C, f^* \mathcal{T}_X \otimes \mathcal{I}_B) = 0$  and  $f^* \mathcal{T}_X \otimes \mathcal{I}_B$  is generated by global sections.



That the two conditions are equivalent follows by taking cohomology of the short exact sequence

$$0 \rightarrow f^* \mathcal{T}_X \otimes \mathcal{I}_B(-p) \rightarrow f^* \mathcal{T}_X \otimes \mathcal{I}_B \rightarrow (f^* \mathcal{T}_X \otimes \mathcal{I}_B)_p \rightarrow 0.$$

**DEFINITION 4.4.** We say that a curve  $f : C \rightarrow X$  is  $r$ -free if for all effective divisors  $D$  of degree  $r \geq 0$ ,  $H^1(C, f^* \mathcal{T}_X \otimes \mathcal{O}_C(-D)) = 0$  and  $f^* \mathcal{T}_X \otimes \mathcal{O}_C(-D)$  is generated by global sections. A 0-free curve is called free whereas a 1-free curve is called very free.

**REMARK 4.5.** The condition of  $r$ -freeness makes formal the notion that the curve  $C$  deforms in  $X$  while keeping any general  $r$  points fixed.

The following lemma follows immediately from Lemma 2.4.

**LEMMA 4.6.** *If  $f : C \rightarrow X$  is an  $r$ -free curve then  $f$  is  $r'$ -free for all  $r' \leq r$ .*

In the case of  $C = \mathbb{P}^1$ , Grothendieck's Theorem [Gro57] gives us that  $f^* \mathcal{T}_X = \oplus_{i=1}^n \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}^1}(a_i)$  with  $a_1 \leq \dots \leq a_n$ . From Corollary 1.1 it follows that for  $r \geq 0$  the condition that  $H^1(\mathbb{P}^1, f^* \mathcal{T}_X(-r-1)) = 0$  is equivalent to that of global generation of  $f^* \mathcal{T}_X(-r)$  (see also [Deb01] Remark 4.6). We deduce that  $f : \mathbb{P}^1 \rightarrow X$  is  $r$ -free if and only if  $a_1 \geq r$ .

We also give a relative version of the above definitions as have already been discussed in [KSCT07].

**DEFINITION 4.7.** Let  $\mathcal{C} \rightarrow Y$  be a flat proper family of curves where  $Y$  is a variety over an algebraically closed field, and let  $X$  be a smooth  $Y$ -variety. Let  $B \subset \mathcal{C}$  be a closed subscheme, finite and flat over  $Y$  and  $g : B \rightarrow X$  a  $Y$ -morphism. We say that a  $Y$ -morphism  $f : \mathcal{C} \rightarrow X$  is relatively free over  $g$  if  $f|_B = g$ ,  $f^* \mathcal{T}_{X/Y} \otimes \mathcal{I}_B$  is globally generated and  $H^1(\mathcal{C}, f^* \mathcal{T}_{X/Y} \otimes \mathcal{I}_B) = 0$ .

**PROPOSITION 4.8.** ([KSCT07] Proposition 14, [Kol96] II.3.5 – 3.7) *Let  $f : \mathcal{C} \rightarrow X$  as above be a morphism which is free over  $f|_B$  and assume that  $\dim Y = 1$  and that  $\mathcal{C} \rightarrow Y$  is surjective. Then*

- i) *The connected component  $\text{Hom}_{[f]}(\mathcal{C}/Y, X/Y, f|_B) \subset \text{Hom}(\mathcal{C}/Y, X/Y, f|_B)$  containing  $f$  is smooth at  $[f]$ .*
- ii) *The evaluation morphism  $\mathcal{C} \times \text{Hom}_{[f]}(\mathcal{C}/Y, X/Y, f|_B) \rightarrow X$  dominates  $X$ .*
- iii) *If  $Z \subset X$  is any subset of codimension at least 2, and  $[f'] \in \text{Hom}_{[f]}(\mathcal{C}/Y, X/Y, f|_B)$  a general point, then  $(f')^{-1}(Z) \subset B$ .*

**REMARK 4.9.** We should remark at this point that there do not exist complete intersection curves which are free on a general smooth hypersurface. For example, let  $X$  be a degree  $d$  smooth hypersurface in  $\mathbb{P}^n$ . Assume  $d \leq n$  since otherwise  $X$  will be of general type or Calabi-Yau and will not have any free curves. Let  $Y_i$  be  $n-2$  suitably general hypersurfaces in  $\mathbb{P}^n$  all of degree  $e$  and let  $C = X \cap_{i=1}^{n-2} Y_i$  be the resulting curve. The degree of  $C$  is  $de^{n-2}$  and we have a short exact sequence

$$0 \rightarrow \mathcal{T}_C \rightarrow \mathcal{T}_X|_C \rightarrow \mathcal{N}_{C/X} \rightarrow 0$$

where the normal bundle is

$$\mathcal{N}_{C/X} = \oplus_{i=1}^{n-2} \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}^n}(Y_i)|_C = \oplus_{i=1}^{n-2} \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{P}^n}(e)|_C.$$

By adjunction, since  $C$  is a complete intersection curve, we compute

$$\deg \mathcal{T}_C = -\deg \omega_C = -d(-n-1+d + \sum_{i=1}^{n-2} e).$$

Even setting  $e = 1$  to make  $\deg \mathcal{T}_C$  as large as possible, and taking into account that  $\deg \mathcal{N}_{C/X} = e(n-2)$ , we see that  $\deg \mathcal{T}_X|_C = \deg \mathcal{T}_C + \deg \mathcal{N}_{C/X}$  is not going to be positive for non-trivial values of  $d$  and  $n$ . Positivity of the degree of  $\mathcal{T}_X|_C$  would be necessary for any ampleness conditions.

The following result gives that a general deformation of a free curve is an embedding. We will often use this implicitly throughout the remainder of this section.

**THEOREM 4.10.** ([Kol96] II.1.8) *Let  $f : C \rightarrow X$  be a morphism from a smooth projective curve to a smooth variety over  $k$ . Let  $B \subset C$  be a subscheme with ideal sheaf  $\mathcal{I}_B$  and  $g = f|_B$ .*

- i) *If  $h^1(C, f^* \mathcal{T}_X \otimes \mathcal{I}_B(-2p)) \leq \dim X - 2$  for every  $p \in C$ , then a general deformation of  $f$  over  $g$  is an immersion on  $C \setminus B$ . Furthermore, if  $g$  is an immersion, then a general deformation of  $f$  over  $g$  is an immersion on  $C$ .*
- ii) *If  $h^1(C, f^* \mathcal{T}_X \otimes \mathcal{I}_B(-p-q)) \leq \dim X - 3$  for every  $p, q \in C$ , then a general deformation of  $f$  over  $g$  is an embedding on  $C \setminus B$ . Furthermore, if  $g$  is an embedding, then a general deformation of  $f$  over  $g$  is an embedding on  $C$ .*

Hence if the dimension of  $X$  is at least 3, a general deformation of a 2-free morphism is an embedding into  $X$ . We will see (Theorem 4.12) that in fact this holds for any free morphism too. From [Kol96] II.3.2, if a family of curves mapping to a variety has a member which is free over  $g$ , then the locus of all such curves in this family is open.

There is another type of positive curve one can consider for a smooth projective variety  $X$ , namely  $f : C \rightarrow X$  such that  $f^* \mathcal{T}_X$  is ample. Note that such a curve automatically has  $\mathcal{N}_{C/X}$  ample as in Lemma 4.1 since the quotient of an ample bundle is ample in the following short exact sequence

$$0 \rightarrow \mathcal{T}_C \rightarrow f^* \mathcal{T}_X \rightarrow \mathcal{N}_{C/X} \rightarrow 0.$$

We will prove that the existence of a curve of genus  $g \geq 1$  such that  $f^* \mathcal{T}_X$  is ample is in fact equivalent to the existence of a free curve of the same genus.

**PROPOSITION 4.11.** *Let  $X$  be a smooth projective variety over an algebraically closed field  $k$  and  $f : C \rightarrow X$  a morphism from a smooth projective curve such that  $f^* \mathcal{T}_X$  is ample. Then for any closed subscheme  $B \subset C$  with ideal sheaf  $\mathcal{I}_B$ , there exists a morphism  $f' : C \rightarrow X$  which is free over  $\mathcal{I}_B$ .*

**PROOF.** If the characteristic of  $k$  is positive, then the result follows from Proposition 2.7 by pulling back by Frobenius as we will see as a special case in the following. Now, assume the characteristic of  $k$  is 0, denote by  $H_X$  an ample divisor on  $X$  and consider the flat proper models  $\mathcal{X}, \mathcal{C}, \mathcal{B}, H_{\mathcal{X}}$  of  $X, C, B, H_X$  respectively over the algebra  $R$  which is  $\mathbb{Z}$  adjoined all the coefficients defining  $C, X$  etc. and all the morphisms between them, as in [Kol96] II.5.10. Denote by  $g_R$  the morphism  $\mathcal{B} \rightarrow \mathcal{X}$ . From the construction, the geometric generic fibre

of  $\mathcal{X}$  is  $X$  and after shrinking  $\text{Spec } R$  we can assume  $\mathcal{C}$  is smooth and the same for  $\mathcal{X}$  over the image of  $f_R : \mathcal{C} \rightarrow \mathcal{X}$ . Note also that after further suitably shrinking  $\text{Spec } R$  we can assume  $f_R^* \mathcal{T}_{\mathcal{X}}$  is a locally free relatively ample bundle on  $\mathcal{C}$  over  $R$  and the same for  $H_{\mathcal{X}}$  on  $\mathcal{X}$ . Now, for any closed fibre  $\mathcal{X}_p$  over a maximal  $p$  in  $R$ , the reduction of  $f_p : \mathcal{C}_p \rightarrow \mathcal{X}_p$  will also have  $f_p^* \mathcal{T}_{\mathcal{X}_p}$  ample and from Proposition 2.7 we have (after pulling back by Frobenius) that there exists a morphism  $f'_p : \mathcal{C}_p \rightarrow \mathcal{X}_p$  which is free over  $\mathcal{S}_{\mathcal{B}_p}$ . We can perform this operation for every closed point  $p$  in  $\text{Spec } R$  and note that from the proof of Proposition 2.7 there is a global bound  $d$  on the intersection number  $(f'_{p*} \mathcal{C}_p) \cdot H_{\mathcal{X}_p}$  depending on the genus  $g$  of  $\mathcal{C}$  and the length of  $B$ . Considering now the relative moduli space  $\text{Hom}_R(\mathcal{C}, \mathcal{X}, g_R)$  and its subset  $\rho : \text{Hom}_R^{\text{free}, \leq d}(\mathcal{C}, \mathcal{X}, g_R) \rightarrow \text{Spec } R$  of Proposition 4.8 containing curves which are free over  $g_R$  and of relative  $H_{\mathcal{X}}$ -degree at most  $d$ , we see that  $\rho$  has non-trivial fibres over the closed points, but these are dense in  $\text{Spec } R$ . We also know that  $\text{Hom}_R^{\text{free}, \leq d}(\mathcal{C}, \mathcal{X}, g_R)$  is of finite type over  $R$  so by Chevalley's Theorem, the image of  $\rho$  is constructible and since it is dense, it must contain the generic point (see [Har77] ex. II.3.18) hence the morphism  $\rho$  must be surjective. Hence there exists a suitably free curve over the generic fibre which means a morphism  $C \rightarrow X$  which is free over  $\mathcal{S}_B$ . We conclude that the curve  $f'_p : \mathcal{C}_p \rightarrow \mathcal{X}_p$  lifts to a curve which is free over  $\mathcal{S}_B$  in characteristic zero.  $\square$

A closer look at the proof of Proposition 2.7 shows that proving global generation and vanishing of first cohomology is just a matter of degrees, hence if  $f : C \rightarrow X$  a curve such that  $f^* \mathcal{T}_X$  is ample, then from the above proposition there is a morphism  $f' : C \rightarrow X$  such that  $f'$  is  $r$ -free for any  $r \geq 0$ . Conversely from Lemma 4.6, if  $C$  is  $r$ -free for some  $r \geq 0$  then it is free and from Proposition 2.3 it follows that  $f^* \mathcal{T}_X$  is ample. The above results and discussion lead to the following.

**THEOREM 4.12.** *Let  $X$  be a smooth projective variety and  $C$  a smooth projective curve of genus  $g \geq 1$  over an algebraically closed field  $k$ . Then for any  $r \geq 0$ , there exists an  $f : C \rightarrow X$  which is  $r$ -free if and only if there exists a morphism  $f' : C \rightarrow X$  such that  $f'^* \mathcal{T}_X$  is ample.*

Note that the above theorem is not true if  $C$  was a rational curve, namely there exist varieties which have a free rational curve (uniruled varieties) which do not have a very free rational curve (rationally connected varieties) - see Theorem 4.19.

**LEMMA 4.13.** *Let  $X$  be a smooth variety over an algebraically closed field  $k$  and  $f : C \rightarrow X$  a free morphism from a smooth projective curve over  $k$ . Then the image of  $C$  misses only finitely many divisors in  $X$ .*

**PROOF.** Note first that deformations of  $C$  all lie in the same class in the cone of curves  $N_1(X)$  so for a given point  $x \in X$ , we can consider the open subset  $U_x \subset X$  consisting of images of deformations of  $f : C \rightarrow X$  which go through  $x$ . The complement is a proper closed subset of  $X$  and so contains a finite number of irreducible closed subsets so a finite number of divisors.  $\square$

**LEMMA 4.14.** *Let  $X$  be a smooth variety over an algebraically closed field  $k$  with  $D \subset X$  a divisor and  $f : C \rightarrow X$  a free morphism from a smooth projective curve over  $k$  and  $p \in C$ . Then there exists a deformation  $f' : C \rightarrow X$  with  $f'(p) \notin D$ .*

**PROOF.** By semicontinuity let  $U \subset \text{Hom}(C, X)$  be a connected open neighbourhood of  $[f]$  such that  $H^1(C, f_t^* \mathcal{T}_X) = 0$  for all  $[f_t] \in U$ . From [Mor79] it follows that the dimension of  $U$  is  $h^0(C, f^* \mathcal{T}_X)$ . Denote by  $\mathcal{I}_p$  the ideal sheaf on  $C$  of the closed subscheme with unique point  $p$ . Since  $f$  is free, we have  $H^1(C, f_t^* \mathcal{T}_X \otimes \mathcal{I}_p) = 0$  for all  $[f_t] \in U$  and so by fixing a point  $x \in X$  such that  $p \mapsto x$ , we have

$$\begin{aligned} \dim(\text{Hom}(C, X; p \mapsto x) \cap U) &= h^0(C, f^* \mathcal{T}_X \otimes \mathcal{I}_p) \\ &= h^0(C, f^* \mathcal{T}_X) - \dim X \\ &= \dim U - \dim X. \end{aligned}$$

Next, denote by

$$V = \{[f_t] \in U \mid f_t(p) \in D\} = \bigcup_{x \in D} \{[f_t] \in U \mid f_t(p) = x\}$$

the subspace of all morphisms in  $U$  which send  $p$  to a point in the divisor  $D$ . It follows that

$$\begin{aligned} \text{codim}(V, U) &\geq \dim U - \dim V \\ &= h^0(C, f^* \mathcal{T}_X) - (h^0(C, f^* \mathcal{T}_X) - \dim X + \dim X - 1) \\ &= 1 \end{aligned}$$

and hence there exists an  $[f'] \in U \setminus V$  such that  $f'(p) \notin D$ .  $\square$

**REMARK 4.15.** Note that this does not hold for  $C$ -connected varieties since it may be that  $H^1(C, f^* \mathcal{T}_X \otimes \mathcal{I}_p) \neq 0$  so when we fix a point in the source and target, the dimension of the space of morphisms does not necessarily decrease by  $\dim X$ . Consider for example  $C \rightarrow C \times \mathbb{P}^n$ .

A similar proof leads to the following result, stating that a general deformation of a free curve will miss a codimension two and above subset.

**LEMMA 4.16.** ([Kol96] II.3.7) *Let  $X$  be a smooth projective variety over an algebraically closed field  $k$  and  $f : C \rightarrow X$  a morphism from a smooth projective curve which is free over  $g : B \rightarrow X$ . Let  $Z \subset X$  be a subscheme of codimension at least 2. Then  $f'(C \setminus B) \cap Z = \emptyset$  for a general deformation  $f'$  of  $f$  over  $g$ .*

**PROPOSITION 4.17.** *Let  $X$  be a smooth variety over an algebraically closed field  $k$  and  $f : C \rightarrow X$  a smooth projective curve which is free over  $B \subset C$  a closed subscheme with ideal sheaf  $\mathcal{I}_B$ . Let  $g : X \dashrightarrow Y$  be a rational map to a smooth variety  $Y$ . Then it follows that  $f' := g \circ f : C \dashrightarrow Y$  can be deformed to a morphism free over  $B$  if either of the following two conditions holds*

- i) *the characteristic of  $k$  is 0 or*
- ii) *the characteristic of  $k$  is positive and  $g$  is generically smooth.*

**PROOF.** First note that in any characteristic we can deform  $f : C \rightarrow X$  so that it misses the codimension 2 exceptional locus of  $g$  (from Lemma 4.16) so we can assume that the composition  $g \circ f : C \dashrightarrow Y$  is in fact a morphism. We also have an exact sequence of sheaves on  $X$

$$0 \rightarrow \mathcal{T}_{X/Y} \rightarrow \mathcal{T}_X \rightarrow g^* \mathcal{T}_Y$$

and applying  $f^*$  and tensoring with  $\mathcal{I}_B$  we obtain the following exact sequence

$$(4.1) \quad 0 \rightarrow f^* \mathcal{T}_{X/Y} \otimes \mathcal{I}_B \rightarrow f^* \mathcal{T}_X \otimes \mathcal{I}_B \rightarrow (g \circ f)^* \mathcal{T}_Y \otimes \mathcal{I}_B.$$

If  $k$  has characteristic zero then by generic smoothness (see [Har77] III.10) we may assume that  $g$  is a smooth morphism and the above sequences are exact on the right. We can now apply Lemma 2.5 to conclude that  $(g \circ f)^* \mathcal{T}_Y \otimes \mathcal{I}_B$  is globally generated and has  $H^1(C, (g \circ f)^* \mathcal{T}_Y \otimes \mathcal{I}_B) = 0$ . Assume now that the characteristic of  $k$  is positive and that  $g : X \rightarrow Y$  is generically smooth. There exists an open  $U \subset X$  such that  $g|_U : U \rightarrow Y$  is smooth, and since  $f$  is free, we can find a deformation whose image misses the complement of  $U$  but for a finite number of points. Hence we have an exact sequence

$$f^* \mathcal{T}_X \rightarrow (g \circ f)^* \mathcal{T}_Y \rightarrow \mathcal{Q} \rightarrow 0$$

where  $\mathcal{Q}$  is a torsion sheaf supported on this finite set of points. This implies that  $f^* \mathcal{T}_X \rightarrow (g \circ f)^* \mathcal{T}_Y$  has full rank (i.e. its image has the same rank as the target). The result now follows from Lemma 2.5.  $\square$

**PROPOSITION 4.18.** ([Kol96] II.3.5) *Let  $C$  be a smooth proper curve,  $p, q \in C$  and  $X$  a smooth variety and  $[f] \in \text{Hom}(C, X, g)$  a smooth point. Using notation of the evaluation morphisms from the beginning of this section we have*

- i) *if  $\phi(p, f)$  is surjective then  $F$  is smooth at  $(p, [f])$ . The converse holds if  $H^0(C, \mathcal{T}_C \otimes \mathcal{I}_B) \rightarrow \mathcal{T}_C \otimes k(p)$  is surjective.*
- ii) *If  $\phi^{(2)}(p, q, f)$  is surjective then  $F^{(2)}$  is smooth at  $(p, q, [f])$ . The converse holds if  $H^0(C, \mathcal{T}_C \otimes \mathcal{I}_B) \rightarrow \mathcal{T}_C \otimes k(p) \oplus \mathcal{T}_C \otimes k(q)$  is surjective.*

We summarise the known results for rationally connected varieties in the following theorem.

**THEOREM 4.19.** *Let  $X$  be a smooth projective variety over an algebraically closed field  $k$ . If the characteristic of  $k$  is zero then the following are equivalent*

- i) *There exists a very free morphism  $f : \mathbb{P}^1 \rightarrow X$ .*
- ii)  *$X$  is  $\mathbb{P}^1$ -connected.*
- iii)  *$X$  is genus 0 connected.*
- iv)  *$X$  is genus 0 chain connected.*

*If the characteristic of  $k$  is positive, then  $(1) \Rightarrow (2) \Leftrightarrow (3) \Rightarrow (4)$ . In any characteristic, if we furthermore assume separability in (2), (3) and (4) then all statements are equivalent to (1).*

Similarly, if  $k$  is algebraically closed of any characteristic,  $X$  is separably uniruled if and only if there exists a free rational curve  $f : \mathbb{P}^1 \rightarrow X$ .

**REMARK 4.20.** An example of a smooth projective variety in positive characteristic  $p$  which is rationally connected but does not have any free rational curves (hence no very free rational curves either) is given by the Fermat hypersurface  $x_0^d + x_1^d + \dots + x_N^d$  where  $N \geq 3$  and  $d = p^r + 1$  (see [Deb01] 4.4).

In the case of higher genus curves though there exist genus  $g$  connected varieties which do not have a free or very free curve for all  $g \geq 1$ , for example consider  $E \times \mathbb{P}^1$  where  $E$  is an elliptic curve. As pointed out before Lemma 3.9,  $E \times \mathbb{P}^1$  is  $E$ -connected yet it is not possible that there exists a morphism  $f : C \rightarrow E \times \mathbb{P}^1$  from a curve  $C$  such that  $f^* \mathcal{T}_{E \times \mathbb{P}^1}$  is ample since this bundle is isomorphic to  $\mathcal{O}_C \oplus \mathcal{O}_C(2)$  which has a non-ample quotient  $\mathcal{O}_C$ . One can however prove the following proposition.

**PROPOSITION 4.21.** *Let  $X$  be a smooth variety over an algebraically closed field and  $f : C \rightarrow X$  a very free morphism for some smooth projective curve  $C$ . Then  $X$  is separably  $C$ -connected.*

**PROOF.** Let  $[f] \in Y \subset \text{Hom}(C, X)$  be an open and smooth neighbourhood with cycle map  $u : C \times Y \rightarrow X$ . We first show that the evaluation map

$$\phi^{(2)}(p, q, f) : H^0(C, f^* \mathcal{T}_X) \rightarrow f^* \mathcal{T}_X \otimes k(p) \oplus f^* \mathcal{T}_X \otimes k(q)$$

is surjective for  $p \neq q$  general points in  $C$ . Consider the following exact sequences of sheaves

$$\begin{aligned} 0 \rightarrow f^* \mathcal{T}_X(-p-q) \rightarrow f^* \mathcal{T}_X \rightarrow (f^* \mathcal{T}_X \otimes k(p)) \oplus (f^* \mathcal{T}_X \otimes k(q)) \rightarrow 0 \\ 0 \rightarrow f^* \mathcal{T}_X(-p-q) \rightarrow f^* \mathcal{T}_X(-p) \rightarrow f^* \mathcal{T}_X(-p) \otimes k(q) \rightarrow 0 \end{aligned}$$

and note that by taking the long exact sequence in cohomology of the first, to show that  $\phi^{(2)}(p, q, f)$  is surjective, we need to show that  $H^1(C, f^* \mathcal{T}_X(-p-q)) = 0$ . Since  $f$  is very free we have from the second sequence that  $H^0(C, f^* \mathcal{T}_X(-p)) \rightarrow f^* \mathcal{T}_X(-p) \otimes k(q)$  is surjective and also that  $H^1(C, f^* \mathcal{T}_X(-p)) = 0$  from which it follows that  $H^1(C, f^* \mathcal{T}_X(-p-q)) = 0$ .

Since  $\phi^{(2)}(p, q, f)$  is surjective, it follows from Proposition 4.18 that  $u^{(2)} : C \times C \times Y \rightarrow X \times X$  is smooth at  $(p, q, [f])$ . We conclude that  $X$  is separably  $C$ -connected and thus also separably connected by genus  $g$  curves.  $\square$

## 5. PROVING UNIRULEDNESS AND RATIONAL CONNECTEDNESS

In this section we prove that the existence of a free curve of genus at least 1 in characteristic zero implies the existence of a very free rational curve.

**PROPOSITION 5.1.** *Let  $X$  be a smooth variety of  $\dim X \geq 2$  over an algebraically closed field  $k$  and  $f : C \rightarrow X$  a free morphism for  $C$  a smooth projective curve of genus  $g$ . Then  $X$  is uniruled.*

**PROOF.** We can compactify  $X$  and assume that it is projective (note that by Lemma 4.16 we can find a free deformation of  $f$  which misses the exceptional locus of a birational map). From the Bend and Break Lemma 1.5, if we show that  $\dim_{[f]} \text{Hom}(C, X; f|_{\{c\}}) \geq 1$ , then there will be a rational curve in  $X$  passing through  $f(c)$ . This condition is equivalent to  $-K_X \cdot C - g \dim X \geq 1$ . Since  $f$  is free, Riemann-Roch gives

$$\begin{aligned} h^0(C, f^* \mathcal{T}_X) &= \deg f^* \mathcal{T}_X + (1 - g) \dim X \\ &= -K_X \cdot C + (1 - g) \dim X \end{aligned}$$



and since  $f^*\mathcal{T}_X$  is globally generated, we have  $h^0(C, f^*\mathcal{T}_X) \geq d = \dim X$ . In fact, consider  $d$  linearly independent sections  $f_1, \dots, f_d \in H^0(C, f^*\mathcal{T}_X)$  and consider the short exact sequence given by these sections

$$0 \rightarrow \mathcal{O}_C^{\oplus d} \rightarrow f^*\mathcal{T}_X \rightarrow \mathcal{Q} \rightarrow 0.$$

Here  $\mathcal{Q}$  is a torsion sheaf and by taking cohomology and noting that  $H^1(C, f^*\mathcal{T}_X) = 0$  we obtain that  $h^0(C, \mathcal{Q}) \geq h^1(C, \mathcal{O}_C^{\oplus d}) = gd$ . Since  $h^0(C, \mathcal{O}_C^{\oplus d}) = d$ , it must be that  $h^0(C, f^*\mathcal{T}_X) > d$ . Hence we obtain  $-K_X.C + (1 - g)\dim X > \dim X$  from which  $-K_X.C - g\dim X \geq 1$  and so Bend and Break applies.  $\square$

From Lemma 4.6 we obtain that the same result holds if  $f$  was very free or such that  $f^*\mathcal{T}_X$  was ample. Note also the above result follows as a combination of Theorem 4.12, Proposition 4.21 and Proposition 3.13, but the above proof is simpler.

**THEOREM 5.2.** *Let  $X$  be a smooth projective variety over an algebraically closed field  $k$  and  $f : C \rightarrow X$  a free morphism from a smooth projective curve of genus  $g \geq 1$ . Then the tower of MRC fibrations terminates with a point.*

**PROOF.** Applying Theorem 4.12 twice we can find a very free morphism  $f' : C \rightarrow X$ . Replacing  $f$  by  $f'$ , it follows from Proposition 4.21 that  $X$  is separably  $C$ -connected. Following the argument as in Proposition 3.14, by showing that at each step of the tower of MRC fibrations  $X \dashrightarrow R^1(X) \dashrightarrow \dots \dashrightarrow R^n(X)$  the target  $R^i(X)$  is uniruled, it must be that  $R^n(X)$  is either a point or a curve  $C'$ . In the latter case, call the dominant composition map  $\pi : X \dashrightarrow C'$  where we can assume that  $C'$  is a smooth projective curve. By invoking Lemma 4.16 it follows that we can assume that  $C$  misses the codimension two exceptional locus of  $\pi$  and from Lemma 4.14, for a point  $p \in C$ , we can deform  $f$  so that the image of  $p$  misses the inverse image under  $\pi$  of  $\pi(f(p))$ . Hence there is an at least 1 dimensional family of non-constant morphisms from  $C$  to  $C'$  and from de Franchis' Theorem ([ACG11] Theorem 8.27) it follows that  $C'$  has genus 0 or 1. Assume that  $C'$  has genus 1. We have  $\mathcal{T}_{C'} = \mathcal{O}_{C'}$  and  $f^*\pi^*\mathcal{O}_{C'} \cong \mathcal{O}_C$  and we thus obtain  $\mathcal{O}_C$  as a quotient of  $f^*\mathcal{T}_X$  since

$$f^*\mathcal{T}_X \rightarrow f^*\pi^*\mathcal{O}_{C'} \rightarrow 0$$

is exact. Taking cohomology we see that since  $f$  is free, one obtains a contradiction since  $H^1(C, \mathcal{O}_C) \neq 0$ . Finally note that  $C' = \mathbb{P}^1$  is ruled out since we have assumed that the tower of MRC fibrations is maximal.  $\square$

As in the discussion following after Proposition 3.14, we obtain the following.

**COROLLARY 5.3.** *In the above setup, if  $k$  has characteristic zero then  $X$  is rationally connected.*

We will see in the next section that a straightforward application of Mori's Bend and Break Lemma 1.5 in combination with the Graber-Harris-Starr Theorem 1.2 leads to proving that every elliptically connected variety over an arbitrary algebraically closed field of characteristic zero is either rationally connected or a rationally connected fibration over an elliptic curve (see Theorem 6.3). Assuming the ampleness of the restriction of a foliation to a smooth curve in characteristic zero, results of this type have been demonstrated in the work of various people. A short summary follows.

**THEOREM 5.4.** ([BM01] Theorem 0.1) *Let  $X$  be a normal complex projective variety and  $C \subset X$  a complete curve in the smooth locus of  $X$ . Assume that  $\mathcal{F} \subset \mathcal{T}_X$  is a foliation regular along  $C$  and such that  $\mathcal{F}|_C$  is ample. If  $x \in C$  is any point, the leaf through  $x$  is algebraic and if  $x \in C$  is general then the closure of the leaf is also rationally connected.*

This result was reproved in [KSCT07] using a simpler Mori-type technique of reduction to characteristic  $p$ , proving uniruledness of the MRC quotient and deriving a contradiction using the Graber-Harris-Starr Theorem [GHS03], in a manner similar to our results. See also [KSC06].

**THEOREM 5.5.** ([BDPP04] Corollary 0.3) *Let  $X/\mathbb{C}$  be a projective manifold. If  $K_X$  is not pseudo-effective then  $X$  is uniruled.*

Using this theorem, Peternell proved a weaker version of Mumford's conjecture on numerical characterisation of rationally connected varieties (Conjecture 1.4) from which one can deduce the following theorem.

**THEOREM 5.6.** ([Pet06] 5.4, 5.5) *Let  $X/\mathbb{C}$  be a projective manifold and  $C \subset X$  a possibly singular curve. If  $\mathcal{T}_X|_C$  is ample then  $X$  is rationally connected. If  $\mathcal{T}_X|_C$  is nef and  $-K_X \cdot C > 0$  then  $X$  is uniruled.*

Using either of Theorems 5.6 or 5.4, a smooth projective variety  $X$  over an algebraically closed field of characteristic zero with a free genus  $g$  curve  $f : C \rightarrow X$  such that  $g \geq 1$  is automatically rationally connected since from Proposition 2.3 we have that  $f^*\mathcal{T}_X$  is ample. Similarly, from Proposition 4.11 and Corollary 5.3 we obtain the following.

**THEOREM 5.7.** *Let  $X$  be a smooth projective variety over an algebraically closed field  $k$  of characteristic zero and assume that there exists a smooth curve  $f : C \rightarrow X$  of genus  $g$  such that  $f^*\mathcal{T}_X$  is ample. Then  $X$  is rationally connected.*

**REMARK 5.8.** At this point we do not know whether the above statement holds in characteristic  $p$  or whether, still in positive characteristic, assuming that we have a free curve  $f : C \rightarrow X$  of genus  $g \geq 1$  implies that  $X$  is separably rationally connected or even rationally chain connected. It is tempting to hope that both statements are true though. Jason Starr informs us that his maximal free rational quotient (MFRC) [Sta06] gives a generically (on the source) smooth morphism  $X \rightarrow R_f(X)$  over any algebraically closed field  $k$ , so if  $X$  contained a free rational curve  $f : \mathbb{P}^1 \rightarrow X$ , then  $\dim R_f(X) < \dim X$ . Hence, if  $f : C \rightarrow X$  a free curve of genus  $g \geq 1$  implied that we have a free rational curve  $\mathbb{P}^1 \rightarrow X$  (we do not know how to show this), taking successive MFRC quotients and using Proposition 4.17 would reduce the tower of MFRC quotients to a point. This does not mean that  $X$  will necessarily be rationally connected, but since there is a free rational curve on  $X$ , it will at least be separably uniruled. Even though Bend and Break arguments give us the existence of many rational curves, the author does not know any techniques to construct free rational curves in positive characteristic.

## 6. ELLIPTICALLY CONNECTED VARIETIES

Let  $k$  be an algebraically closed field of arbitrary characteristic. In this section we will study more carefully the cases of genus 1 connected (elliptically connected),  $E$ -connected varieties and free morphisms  $E \rightarrow X$  where  $E$  is an elliptic curve.

Denoting RC and EC to mean rationally and elliptically connected respectively, it follows from Lemma 3.7 that we have the following inclusions of sets of varieties

$$\{\text{rational}\} \subsetneq \{\text{unirational}\} \subseteq \{\text{RC}\} \subsetneq \{\text{EC}\} \subsetneq \{\text{uniruled}\}.$$

It is an open problem whether there exists a non-unirational rationally connected variety but it is widely expected these do exist. An example of an elliptically but not rationally connected variety is given by  $E \times \mathbb{P}^n$  as we saw in the discussion after Definition 3.8. An example of an elliptically connected variety which is not  $E$ -connected for some genus 1 curve is given at the end of this section. We begin with a Bend and Break lemma.

**LEMMA 6.1.** *Let  $f : E \rightarrow X$  be a morphism from a smooth genus 1 curve  $E$  to a smooth projective variety  $X$  over an algebraically closed field  $k$  of dimension at least 2 and let  $e \in E$ . Assume that  $-K_X \cdot f_*E > 0$  (for example  $-K_X$  ample). Then there exists a rational curve on  $X$  through  $f(e)$ .*

**PROOF.** Mori's Bend and Break Lemma 1.5 tells us that the conclusion of this lemma holds if the condition  $\dim_{[f]} \text{Hom}(E, X; f|_e) \geq 1$  holds. By [Deb01] 2.11 this is equivalent to  $-K_X \cdot f_*E - \dim X \geq 1$ . From the projection formula, the integer  $-K_X \cdot f_*E$  is equal to  $f^*(-K_X) \cdot E$ . Now we can consider  $[n] : E \rightarrow E$  the multiplication by  $n$  isogeny on the elliptic curve  $E$  and precompose  $E \rightarrow X$  by this isogeny thus arbitrarily increasing  $-K_X \cdot f_*E$  the degree of  $E$  under the anti-canonical embedding.  $\square$

**PROPOSITION 6.2.** *Let  $X$  be an elliptically connected smooth projective variety. Then*

- i) *if  $X$  is a surface it is either rationally connected or ruled, in particular it is uniruled,*
- ii) *if  $\dim X \geq 3$  then  $X$  is uniruled.*

**PROOF.** Let  $\mathcal{E} \rightarrow Y$  be the family of genus 1 curves which makes  $X$  elliptically connected. For (i), assume that  $X$  is a smooth elliptically connected surface. Pick  $x$  a point on  $X$  and  $f : C \rightarrow X$  a smooth irreducible genus 1 curve whose image passes through  $x$ . Since elliptic curves have trivial canonical bundle, the converse condition in Proposition 4.18 (1) is satisfied and it follows that  $f^*\mathcal{T}_X$  is globally generated at  $x$ . This holds for all  $x \in C$  so  $f^*\mathcal{T}_X$  is a globally generated vector bundle. Now, we can assume  $C$  is smoothly embedded in  $X$  and consider the short exact sequence

$$0 \rightarrow \mathcal{T}_C \rightarrow \mathcal{T}_X|_C \rightarrow \mathcal{N}_{C/X} \rightarrow 0$$

where  $\mathcal{T}_C = \mathcal{O}_C$  is trivial and  $\mathcal{N}_{C/X}$  is the normal line bundle of  $C$  in  $X$ . Since  $\mathcal{T}_X|_C$  and  $\mathcal{T}_C$  are globally generated, it follows that  $\deg \mathcal{N}_{C/X} > 0$ . From the adjunction formula  $2g_C - 2 = C \cdot (C + K_X)$  and so  $C \cdot K_X = -C^2 = -\deg \mathcal{N}_{C/X} < 0$  from which it follows that  $K_X$  is not nef. From the classification of surfaces (see for example [Fri98] Theorem 10.4), this implies that  $X$  is either rational or ruled and hence uniruled. Alternatively, since  $-C \cdot K_X > 0$  we can apply Bend and Break as in Lemma 6.1 and produce a rational curve through every point of  $X$ .

For (ii), we apply Bend and Break as follows. Fix a general point  $x \in X$ . From Mumford's Rigidity Lemma, we know that no fibres of  $\mathcal{E} \rightarrow Y$  are contracted in  $X$ . Hence, since  $\mathcal{E} \times_Y \mathcal{E}$

dominates  $X \times X$  we know that  $\dim Y \geq 2 \dim X - 2$ . Now, the subspace  $Z$  in  $Y$  of curves which go through  $x$  has dimension at least  $\dim Y - (\dim X - 1)$  and so the subspace  $Z'$  in  $Z$  of curves of fixed  $j$ -invariant that go through  $x$  has dimension  $\dim Z' \geq \dim Y - (\dim X - 1) - 1$ . Hence  $\dim Z' \geq \dim X - 2 \geq 1$  since  $X$  has dimension at least 3. From Lemma 1.5 it now follows that there is a rational curve through  $x$ . After possibly an extension to an uncountable algebraically closed field this implies that  $X$  is uniruled (see [Deb01] Remark 4.2(5)).  $\square$

**THEOREM 6.3.** *Let  $X$  be a smooth projective variety over an algebraically closed field  $k$  of characteristic zero. Then  $X$  is elliptically connected if and only if it is rationally connected or a rationally connected fibration over an elliptic curve.*

**PROOF.** Consider the MRC fibration  $\pi : X \dashrightarrow R(X)$ . From Corollary 1.3, we know that  $R(X)$  is not uniruled. On the other hand, we know from Lemma 3.10 part (1) that  $R(X)$  is elliptically connected since  $\pi$  is dominant. Since  $R(X)$  is elliptically connected and not uniruled, it follows from Proposition 6.2 that it must be either of dimension 0 and thus  $X$  is rationally connected, or of dimension 1 and so an elliptic curve  $E$  by the Riemann-Hurwitz Theorem. By resolving the indeterminacy locus of the rational map  $X \dashrightarrow R(X)$  we find a birational model  $X'$  of  $X$  such that  $X' \rightarrow E$  has rationally connected general fibre. Consider the commutative diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccc} X & \longrightarrow & X' \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow \\ \text{Alb } X & \longrightarrow & E \end{array}$$

where  $X \rightarrow \text{Alb } X$  is the Albanese morphism (which contracts all rational curves in  $X$ ) and  $\text{Alb } X \rightarrow E$  comes from the universality of the Albanese variety. We obtain that  $\text{Alb } X$  is an elliptic curve  $E'$  isogenous to  $E$  and that the fibres of  $X \rightarrow E'$  are rationally connected.

Conversely, we have seen that a rationally connected variety is elliptically connected in Lemma 3.7. If on the other hand  $X$  is a rationally connected fibration over an elliptic curve  $E$  then from Proposition 3.12 we know that it is  $E$ -connected.  $\square$

**REMARK 6.4.** In case  $k$  was of positive characteristic, using the same methods as in Lemma 3.14 we deduce that for an elliptically connected variety  $X$ , the tower of the MRC fibration  $X \dashrightarrow R^1(X) \dashrightarrow \cdots \dashrightarrow R^n(X)$  terminates with  $R^n(X)$  a point or a curve.

We now give an example of a way of constructing elliptically connected varieties over an arbitrary field that are not rationally connected. Families of such objects were recently constructed by Bjorn Poonen [Poo10] as counterexamples to the sufficiency of the Brauer-Manin obstruction applied to étale covers and we outline the construction in the following paragraph.

Let  $k$  be any field and let  $P_\infty(x), P_0(x)$  be two relatively prime and separable degree 4 polynomials in  $k[x]$ . Consider the vector bundle  $\mathcal{L} = \mathcal{O}(1, 2)$  on  $\mathbb{P}^1 \times \mathbb{P}^1$  and define the

section

$$s := u^2 \tilde{P}_\infty(w, x) + v^2 \tilde{P}_0(w, x) \in \Gamma(\mathbb{P}^1 \times \mathbb{P}^1, \mathcal{L}^{\otimes 2})$$

where  $\tilde{P}_\infty, \tilde{P}_0$  are the homogenisations and  $(u, v)$  and  $(w, x)$  are the coordinates of each of the two copies of  $\mathbb{P}^1$  respectively. For  $a \in k^*$ , the equation  $y^2 - az^2 = s$  defines a conic bundle  $V \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^1 \times \mathbb{P}^1$ . Composing with the first projection  $\mathbb{P}^1 \times \mathbb{P}^1 \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^1$ , the fibre in  $V$  above  $\infty \in \mathbb{P}^1$  is the Châtelet surface  $V_\infty : y^2 - ax^2 = P_\infty(x)$ . Now let  $f : E \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^1$  be a dominant map from an elliptic curve such that  $f$  is étale over the branch locus of the first projection of the zero locus of  $s$  to  $\mathbb{P}^1$  (i.e. the locus  $Z \in \mathbb{P}^1 \times \mathbb{P}^1$  over which the fibres in  $V$  split into a nodal union of two lines). We have a pullback diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccc} X := V \times_{\mathbb{P}^1} C & \longrightarrow & V \\ \downarrow \pi & & \downarrow \\ E & \xrightarrow{f} & \mathbb{P}^1 \end{array}$$

where now  $X \rightarrow E$  is a fibration in Châtelet surfaces over an elliptic curve. In other words, after passing to an uncountable algebraically closed field from Lemma 3.10 parts (4) and (6) and using Theorem 6.3,  $X$  is an elliptically connected threefold which is not rationally connected.

## 7. TOWARDS A POSITIVE CHARACTERISTIC ANALOGUE

From Remark 5.8 and the work preceding it, we would like to demonstrate that the existence of a free higher genus curve implies the existence of a free rational curve in positive characteristic, something which holds in characteristic zero by combining Theorems 5.3 and 4.19. In this section we will prove small results in this direction.

**LEMMA 7.1.** *Let  $X$  be a smooth projective variety of dimension  $n$  over an algebraically closed field  $k$  with  $f : C \rightarrow X$  a free morphism from a smooth projective curve of genus  $g$ . Then*

$$C.K_X \leq n - g(n + 1).$$

**PROOF.** We have a short exact sequence

$$0 \rightarrow \mathcal{T}_C \rightarrow f^* \mathcal{T}_X \rightarrow \mathcal{N}_{C/X} \rightarrow 0.$$

Since  $f$  is free,  $\deg \mathcal{N}_{C/X} > 0$  and by taking cohomology of the above short exact sequence we know that  $H^0(C, \mathcal{N}_{C/X}) \rightarrow H^1(C, \mathcal{T}_C)$  is surjective and  $H^1(C, \mathcal{N}_{C/X}) = 0$ . By Serre duality,  $h^1(C, \mathcal{T}_C) = h^0(C, \omega_C^{\otimes 2}) = 4g - 3$  and so  $h^0(C, \mathcal{N}_{C/X}) \geq 4g - 3$ , where  $g$  is the genus of  $C$ . By Riemann-Roch,

$$\begin{aligned} \deg \mathcal{N}_{C/X} &= h^0(C, \mathcal{N}_{C/X}) - h^1(C, \mathcal{N}_{C/X}) + (n - 1)(g - 1) \\ &\geq (n + 3)g - (n + 2). \end{aligned}$$

We now have that

$$\begin{aligned}
C.K_X &= \deg f^* \omega_X \\
&= \deg (f^* \wedge^n \mathcal{T}_X^*) \\
&= \deg \left( \mathcal{T}_C^* \otimes \wedge^{n-1} \mathcal{N}_{C/X}^* \right) \\
&= 2g - 2 - \deg \mathcal{N}_{C/X}
\end{aligned}$$

and so  $C.K_X \leq -g(n+1) + n$ .  $\square$

**PROPOSITION 7.2.** *Let  $X$  be a smooth projective surface over an algebraically closed field  $k$  with  $f : C \rightarrow X$  a very free morphism from a smooth projective curve  $C$ . It follows that  $X$  is separably rationally connected.*

**PROOF.** If  $C$  is of genus 0 then  $X$  is separably rationally connected by definition. In general we only need to assume that the curve is free and from the above Lemma 7.1 we have that  $K_X$  is not nef and from the classification of surfaces ([Fri98] Theorem 10.4) this means that  $X$  is either a rational or ruled surface. If  $X$  was ruled it would admit a birational morphism to  $\mathbb{P}^1 \times C$ . From Proposition 4.17 the free morphism  $f : C \rightarrow X$  would give a free morphism  $C \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^1 \times C$  which would mean  $C$  must be a rational curve and that  $X$  was birational to  $\mathbb{P}^2$ . In other words, the only possibility is that  $X$  is a rational surface and the result follows.  $\square$

**REMARK 7.3.** Some remarks about the case of dimension three, where the minimal model program is incomplete in positive characteristic. From the main theorem in [Kol91], assuming  $X$  is smooth and that it admits a free morphism from a curve, we can contract extremal rays in the cone of curves in arbitrary characteristic, to obtain a Fano fibration over a curve, surface or point (i.e.  $X$  is Fano). In the case where there exists a conic fibration  $X \rightarrow Y$  where  $Y$  is a smooth surface, Kollár proves that if the characteristic of  $k$  is not 2 then the general fibre is smooth. From Proposition 4.17 it follows that the composition morphism  $C \rightarrow Y$  is free and so from the above proposition for the case of surfaces,  $Y$  is a rational surface. Hence  $X$  is a conic bundle over a rational surface so it is rational, hence separably rationally connected. If  $X \rightarrow Y$  a Fano fibration over a curve, to the author's knowledge, it is not known whether the fibres of the del Pezzo surface fibration over  $Y$  obtained in this way must be smooth. Assuming for the time being that they were, they would be separably rationally connected and from the deformation theory argument in Theorem 5.2 and de Franchis' Theorem ([ACG11] Theorem 8.27),  $Y$  would be  $\mathbb{P}^1$ . From the de Jong-Starr Theorem 1.2 we would obtain sections  $\mathbb{P}^1 \rightarrow X$  from which we could assemble combs with very free teeth to be smoothed to very free rational curves in  $X$ , showing that  $X$  is separably rationally connected.

The following result is well known in the case of  $\mathbb{P}^1$  (see [Deb01] 4.18) and easily extends to higher genus.

**PROPOSITION 7.4.** *Let  $f : C \rightarrow X$  be a very free morphism from a smooth projective curve  $C$  to a smooth projective variety  $X$  over an algebraically closed field  $k$ . Then for all positive*



integers  $m, p$

$$H^0(X, (\Omega_X^p)^{\otimes m}) = 0.$$

**PROOF.** Since  $f : C \rightarrow X$  is very free, from Proposition 4.21 there is a variety  $U$  such that  $C \times U \rightarrow X$  makes  $X$  separably  $C$ -connected. Being very free is an open property ([Kol96] II.3.2) so we can assume that the general morphism  $f_u : C_u \rightarrow X$  for  $u \in U$  is very free, and so  $f_u^* \mathcal{T}_X$  is ample from Proposition 2.3 (and by definition of a very free curve in the genus 0 case). We conclude that for a general point  $x \in X$  there is a morphism  $f_u : C_u \rightarrow X$  such that  $f_u^* \mathcal{T}_X$  is ample and whose image passes through  $x$ . Hence since  $f_u^* \Omega_X^1$  is negative, any section of  $(\Omega_X^p)^{\otimes m}$  must vanish on the image  $f(C_u)$  hence on a dense open subset of  $X$ , and so on  $X$ .  $\square$

**PROPOSITION 7.5.** *Let  $f : C \rightarrow X$  be a very free morphism from a smooth projective curve  $C$  to a smooth projective variety  $X$  over an algebraically closed field  $k$ . It follows that the Albanese variety  $\text{Alb } X$  is trivial.*

**PROOF.** Note that in characteristic zero, we have that

$$\dim \text{Alb } X = \dim \text{Pic}^0 X = \dim H^1(X, \mathcal{O}_X) = h^{0,1}.$$

Hodge duality gives that  $h^{1,0} = h^{0,1}$  but more generally over any algebraically closed field we have (see [Igu55]) that  $\dim \text{Alb } X \leq h^{1,0} = h^0(X, \Omega_X^1)$ . The result follows from Proposition 7.4.  $\square$

## 8. AN EXAMPLE IN POSITIVE CHARACTERISTIC

Let  $X$  be the Fermat quintic surface  $x_0^5 + x_1^5 + x_2^5 + x_3^5 = 0$  in  $\mathbb{P}^3$  over an algebraically closed field of characteristic  $p$ . In [Shi74] it is proven that if  $p \neq 5$  and  $p$  is not congruent to 1 modulo 5, then  $X$  is a unirational general type surface and if we quotient by the action of the group  $G$  of 5-th roots of unity  $x_i \mapsto \zeta^i x_i$ , then we obtain a Godeaux surface which is again unirational but has algebraic fundamental group  $\pi_1^{\text{et}}(X/G, \bar{y}) \cong \mathbb{Z}/5\mathbb{Z}$ . Note that in characteristic zero, the notions of rationally chain connected, rationally connected, freely rationally connected (see [She10]) and separably rationally connected all coincide and it is known that each variety in this class is simply connected. In positive characteristic however these notions are in decreasing generality and can differ. A rationally chain connected variety always has finite fundamental group (see [CL03]) whereas a freely rationally connected variety is simply connected (see [She10]). Note that Shioda's example above gives a unirational and hence rationally connected variety over a characteristic  $p$  algebraically closed field which is not simply connected.

We show there is a smooth projective variety in characteristic  $p$  which has infinite étale fundamental group but after a finite number of MRC quotients we terminate with a point. Let  $C$  be a smooth 5 to 1 cover of  $\mathbb{P}^1$ , with defining affine equation of the form  $y^5 = f(x)$  where  $f$  is a general polynomial of high degree. We have an action of  $G = \mathbb{Z}/5\mathbb{Z}$  on  $C$  which we can extend to the product  $X \times C$  of the above Fermat quintic  $X$  with  $C$ . Projecting

from the quotient onto the second factor we have a morphism

$$(X \times C)/G \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^1$$

where we have identified  $C/G$  with  $\mathbb{P}^1$ . The general fibre of this morphism is isomorphic to  $X$ . We have a short exact sequence

$$1 \rightarrow \pi_1^{\text{et}}(X, \bar{x}) \times \pi_1^{\text{et}}(C, \bar{c}) \rightarrow \pi_1^{\text{et}}((X \times C)/G, \bar{z}) \rightarrow G \rightarrow 1.$$

Hence we have constructed an example of a smooth projective variety over an algebraically closed field of characteristic  $p$  whose fundamental group is infinite yet whose tower of MRC quotients terminates with a point.

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